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Contents

March 2019

FEATURES

40 Player biography
Christian Pulisic

46 Special feature
Europe's footballing hot spots

30 Eyewitness
France

THE WORLD THIS MONTH

People in the news...on and off the pitch

4 **In pictures**
10 **From the Editor**
14 **Keir Radnedge** the game's whistle-blowers
16 **Gordon Banks** 1937-2019
18 **Paul Gardner** the problem with stats
20 **Ins & outs** people on the move
22 **Brian Glanville** England's number one

EYEWITNESS

26 **Asian Cup**

HEADLINERS

34 **Hakeem Al Araibi**
36 **Paulo Henrique Ganso**
37 **Zvonimir Boban**
38 **Abel Xavier**
39 **Patrice-Edouard Ngaissona**

TALENT SCOUT

54 **Expat youth**

6 OF THE BEST

56 **Stars of the second tier**

WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

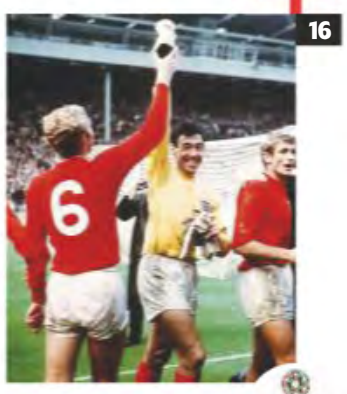
58 **World Cup coaching changes**

ARCHIVES

60 **March 1982**

RIVALS

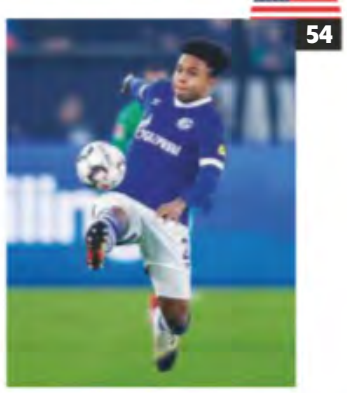
82 **New York City & New York Red Bulls**



16

26

36



54

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70

64 **MLS** a look at the upcoming season
66 **Libertadores Cup** 2019 preview
69 **British Virgin Islands** a new start
70 **Japan** David Villa joins Vissel Kobe
72 **South American U20s** Brazil flop
74 **African Nations Cup** final round

PLUS 68 Global diary 76 ESM XI 77 Results tables, fixtures 80 Squads

In Pictures

The global game caught on camera

SPAIN...Real Madrid's Gareth Bale lies frustrated on the ground during the Spanish Cup semi-final against Barcelona at Camp Nou

HOLLAND...AZ keeper Marco Bizot during an Eredivisie game

GERMANY...St Pauli's Johannes Flum gets to grips with Sebastian Andersson of Union Berlin

ITALY...Roma midfielder Nicolo Zaniolo gets squashed between two Porto defenders

UAE...people gather on a hill to watch Australia and Uzbekistan in the Asian Cup

THAILAND... Buriram United's Suphanat Mueanta is stopped in his tracks against Chiangrai United

ENGLAND...Matt Doherty of Wolverhampton Wanderers collides with West Ham United keeper Lukasz Fabianski

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FROM THE EDITOR

At the start of this season, few people would have predicted that six months later two of the most talked about footballers in the world would be Emiliano Sala (page 30) and Hakeem Al Araibi (page 34). Sadly, events of the past month have ensured that they have made headlines for all the wrong reasons.

Sala's time in French football was largely undistinguished, bar his recent achievements at Nantes. Sadly, his career will be remembered for a fateful plane journey that has raised all sorts of questions about modern football clubs and the way they conduct their business.

The case of Al Araibi has again exposed the complex world of Middle East politics with which football often entangles itself. Events off the pitch at the recent Asian Cup (page 26), won surprisingly by Qatar, were dominated by the ongoing dispute between the 2022 World Cup hosts and their neighbours. It is a story to which we will return time and again before the next World Cup.

> The Al Araibi case exposes the complex world of Middle East politics with which football often entangles itself

A decision on the possible expansion of the 2022 finals to 48 teams is expected in the next month. An expansion is highly unlikely – but stranger things have happened.

Gavin Hamilton, Editor

10 SIGNIFICANT EVENTS THIS MONTH

1 Qatar win the Asian Cup p26
2 Argentinian striker Emiliano Sala dies in plane crash p30
3 Hakeem Al Araibi is spared extradition to Bahrain p34
4 Gordon Banks dies aged 81 ..... p16
5 New arrivals in Major League Soccer p64
6 Brazil flop at the South American Under-20s p72
7 Infantino and Ceferin to serve second terms p10
8 Libertadores Cup gets underway p66
9 Football Leaks "John" arrested p14
10 Final round of African Nations Cup qualifiers p74

Power...Aleksander Ceferin (left) and Gianni Infantino

SWITZERLAND

Infantino and Ceferin to serve second terms

Gianni Infantino and Aleksander Ceferin will serve second terms as presidents of FIFA and UEFA respectively, both for four years.

Infantino, who was first elected in 2016 following the departure of Sepp Blatter, had no challengers come forward to stand against him at FIFA Congress in June and is now expected to press ahead with plans for a new expanded Club World Cup and a global Nations League.

However, these proposals may place the 48-year-old Italo-Swiss lawyer at odds with Ceferin and UEFA.

Ceferin, who was re-elected unopposed at UEFA's annual congress in Rome, has promised a dramatic overhaul of European club competitions.

"We will work hand in hand with our partner, the European Club Association, to design the club competitions of the future," says the 51-year-old Slovenian. "Club competitions that are in keeping with the times, full of excitement and intensity and open, which will bring a new dimension to European football."

At the same congress in Italy, Paris Saint-Germain president Nasser Al Khelaifi was voted on to the UEFA executive despite a potential conflict of interest with the ongoing UEFA investigation into his club's financial affairs.

"I want my kids to grow up in an Islamic atmosphere"

Moroccan defender Mehdi Benatia on leaving Juventus to sign for Qatari club Al Duhail

BRAZIL

Fire kills 10 teens at Flamengo's training ground

Brazil club Flamengo are to face some serious questions after 10 teenage footballers died in a fire in a dormitory at the club's training ground in Rio de Janeiro.

The fire was reportedly caused by an electrical fault in an air-conditioning unit and the club now faces an investigation after Rio authorities said that the area affected by the fire was registered for parking, not as a dormitory.

"We are distraught," said Flamengo president Rodolfo Landim. "This is the worst tragedy to happen to the club in its 123 years.

"The most important thing right now is to minimise the suffering of these families."

Tragedy...an aerial view of the fire-damaged area

HEROES & VILLAINS

On fire...Racing Club striker Lisandro Lopez

LISANDRO LOPEZ

The Racing Club striker managed to score 10 goals in 10 games to lead the scoring charts In Argentina's Superliga.

CRAIG FOSTER

The former Australia international turned media pundit played an instrumental role in the campaign to prevent Hakeem Al Araibi being extradited to Bahrain from Thailand.

EDINSON CAVANI & KYLIAN MBAPPE

The duo became the first team-mates for 40 years to score Ligue 1 hat-tricks in the same game as they helped Paris Saint-Germain to a 9-0 victory over Guingamp.

Saved...Jasper Cillessen

JASPER CILLESSEN

The Barcelona goalkeeper, who was famously substituted by Dutch coach Louis Van Gaal prior to the start of Holland's 2014 World Cup penalty shoot-out win over Costa Rica, saved the first spot-kick of his club career when he denied Ever Banega in a Spanish Cup victory over Sevilla.

Bad start...Monaco defender Naldo (far left) sees red

NALDO

The Brazilian defender, who was sent off three times in 358 Bundesliga matches, was shown two red cards in his first three Ligue 1 matches for new club Monaco.

IBRAHIM CHAIBOU

The Niger referee was banned for life by FIFA after being accused of taking bribes to corrupt international friendly games in 2010 and 2011.

GIANCARLO FAVARIN

The coach of Serie C side Lucchese was given a five-month ban for head-butting Gaetano Mancino, the assistant boss of Alessandria, following a 2-2 draw between the sides.

EDIN DZEKO

The Roma striker was sent off for spitting at the referee in his side's 7-1 Italian Cup defeat by Fiorentina.

Off...Edin Dzeko receives his marching orders

"We were awful, had no mental strength, it was a humiliation and the main person responsible is me"

Nacional coach Costinha takes full responsibility for his side's 10-0 thrashing in the Portuguese league by Benfica

Joao FELIX

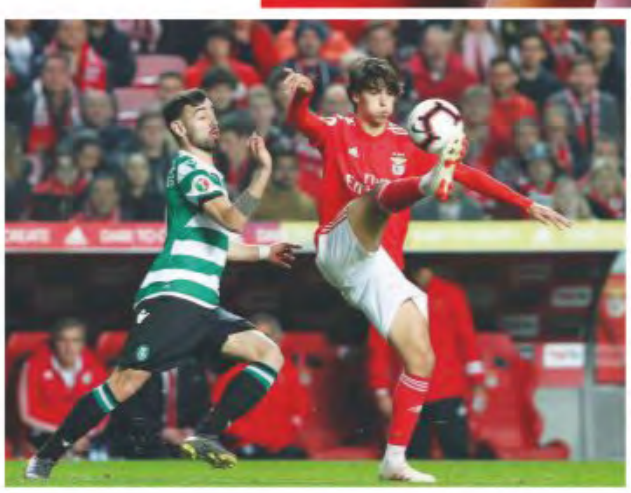
(Benfica)

The 19-year-old attacking midfielder has been a revelation in recent weeks. He was the subject of a €60million offer from an unnamed Premier League side in January, a move that prompted Benfica to raise his release clause to €120m.

Having made his debut for the club in August, his big opportunity came in January when they parted company with coach Rui Vitoria. His successor, Bruno Lage, had coached Felix in the club's B side and the youngster, who can play as a winger or striker, quickly became a key part of his 4-4-2 system, alongside Swiss centre-forward Haris Seferovic.

A cooly-taken goal against Sporting in the Lisbon derby was watched by Cristiano Ronaldo, prompting inevitable comparisons, but Felix already has better stats than the Juventus star at the same stage, having notched eight goals and three assists in his first 1000 minutes as a senior player.

Born in the central Portuguese town of Viseu, he spent his early days in the youth ranks at nearby Porto but was released as the club considered him too lightweight. It was a decision which, given the growing interest among Europe's elite clubs, looks certain to come back to haunt them.



Jorge MOLINA
(Getafe)
The journeyman striker is enjoying a fine season – at the ripe old age of 36.

Jerdy Schouten
(Excelsior)
The midfielder has been one of the revelations of the Dutch season and a summer move from Rotterdam to one of Holland's big three is on the cards.

Nicolas PEPE
(Lille)
The Ivorian attacker is in spectacular goalscoring form in Ligue 1 and is likely to attract heavyweight bids this year.

Jean BUTEZ
(Mouscron)
The 23-year-old is probably the best goalkeeper in Belgium at the moment.

Nicolo ZANIOLO
(Roma)
The 19-year-old, who was called into the Italy squad before he had played in Serie A, scored both goals in Roma's 2-1 Champions League victory over Porto.

Davy KLAASSEN
(Werder Bremen)
After a frustrating spell at Everton, the Dutchman is enjoying a revival in the Bundesliga.

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Keir RADNEDGE

THE INSIDER

Whistle-blowers are playing a dangerous game

Breaking news... German magazine *Der Spiegel*

It takes courage to be a whistle-blower. The convention is that the individual is an insider outraged by the corrupt, illicit, illegal and/or immoral behaviour of bosses or colleagues; the righteous putting integrity ahead of job security and friendships.

But, sometimes, all may not be quite as it seems...

This is the conundrum concerning "John", now revealed as Rui Pedro Goncalves Pinto, whose "Football Leaks" exploits have brought sleepless nights to football's high and mighty.

Pinto is 30, Portuguese and lives in the Hungarian capital of Budapest, which provides him with a lifestyle he believes his own country trashed long ago. Or, at least, this is where he lives right now, under house arrest with an electronic tag on one ankle.

Portugal has launched extradition proceedings, while police investigators in Belgium, France, Switzerland and the USA want access to the 70million documents in his database.

Football Leaks exploded last autumn when Pinto handed *Der Spiegel* a vast cache of documents. The German news magazine shared these with the European Investigative Collaboration, comprising 15 European news outlets. Their own investigative teams cross-checked the hacked files, comparing hidden confidentiality with disclosed information.

But Pinto's story goes back to 2013, when he hacked into a Caledonian Bank branch in the Cayman Islands. He skimmed €270,000 but was caught and only negotiated his way out of trouble because the bank feared the publicity of a court case.

In 2015, working from his bedroom in the family home in Gaia, near Oporto, Pinto hacked into the transfer secrets of the player investor Doyen Sports and delved into its connections to Sporting and Porto, a number of illicit commissions and some murky business at Benfica.

Doyen pursued Pinto, who demanded money in return for his files. Nothing, apparently, was paid.

In the spring of 2016 he cast his cybernet wider and began a steady drip-feed into the public domain: secret cash clauses in Neymar's Barcelona contract; tax avoidance schemes which proved costly for Cristiano Ronaldo and Jose Mourinho; Swansea City's transfer dealings during Michael Laudrup's managerial spell; and revelations about Paris Saint-Germain's accounts.

Then there was silence – until last November, when it all started again, with *Der Spiegel* boasting imminent "disclosures about the 'dirty deals' of the football world", promising "dozens of articles will dive deep into the business of European football – a billion-euro industry".

German champions Bayern Munich were the initial target of *Der Spiegel*, which used the leaked material to claim the club's senior directors "spent months forging its plan for a Super League with the most powerful and the richest football clubs in Europe".

Real Madrid were named as leading plotters, along with supposed interest from Barcelona, Manchester United, Milan, Juventus, Chelsea, Arsenal, Paris Saint-Germain, Manchester City and Liverpool, plus invitees Atletico Madrid, Marseille, Internazionale, Roma and Borussia Dortmund.

Some clubs denied it; some did not bother.

In Switzerland, newspaper *Tages Anzeiger* preferred to focus on FIFA president Gianni Infantino, stating: "Infantino vowed to clean up the world's most hated sports organization. Confidential documents reveal how hollow his promises were."

Tages Anzeiger, feeding off Football Leaks, questioned Infantino's role in the 2026 World Cup award, the redrafting of FIFA's ethics set-up, the acceleration of development-cash distribution and "teaming up with an investor that had not followed normal public tender procedures" over the revamping of the Club World Cup.

It also picked up on Infantino's role, while at UEFA, in negotiations over Financial Fairplay breaches by PSG and Manchester City. Both FIFA and UEFA shrugged off the tales "due to confidentiality obligations which [we] must respect", but UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin did respond that

Prayers... Anas Aremeyaw Anas (centre) with work colleagues

a "European Super League would damage football worldwide".

Illicit hacking or not, UEFA sent the Paris Saint-Germain and Manchester City files back to its FFP regulator for further investigations, with PSG sufficiently spooked to challenge the decision, in vain, at the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

Simultaneously, *Der Spiegel* was tipped off about Cristiano Ronaldo's "hush money" deal in June 2009 over his fling in Las Vegas with a young woman named Kathryn Mayorga. He called the report "fake news", but Las Vegas police reopened its investigation and requested a DNA sample.

Tax avoidance, financial fairplay breaches, transfer double-dealing, back-door deals at the highest levels ...all serious stuff. But lifting the lid on corruption is not a safe occupation.

Last May, Kwesi Nyantakyi, FIFA Council member, vice-president of CAF and head of the Ghana FA was arrested in Accra on corruption charges. Within weeks he quit all his posts and was suspended from football.

Nyantakyi had been recorded using the name of the state president and other senior government officials to try to persuade "potential investors" to part with up to $65million. He was exposed by investigative journalist Anas Aremeyaw Anas in a two-hour TV documentary.

Football Leaks' "John"...revealed as Rui Pinto

Anas and his colleagues from Tiger Eye Private Investigations not only nailed Nyantakyi but also referees who took bribes ranging from goats to cash sums of $650. Kenya's Aden Range Marwa, who had been due to be an assistant referee at the World Cup was caught accepting $600 in cash.

Eight months later, in January, when the immediate fuss had faded, Anas' work colleague Ahmed Hussein-Suale was shot dead.

Wearing a mask, Anas made a rare public appearance in February at the annual congress of the international sports journalists' association AIPS to explain: "I knew nothing about sport but when we work on a story over a long period it is because we know it can achieve a maximum resolution.

"When you are dealing with extreme diseases you have to respond with extreme remedies. I belong to the remedies. But we know all investigators face some level of danger."

They also operate as lone wolves in grey areas – as *Der Spiegel* found out just before Christmas when it was revealed that one of its top journalists, Claas Relotius, had "made up stories and invented protagonists".

That prompts further questions about Pinto. Was he operating alone or with other hackers? What was his motivation?

He told *Der Spiegel*: "I don't consider myself as a hacker but as a citizen who acted in the public interest. My sole intention was to reveal illicit practices that affect the world of football." WS

> When the immediate fuss had faded, Anas' work colleague Ahmed Hussein-Suale was shot dead

'JOHN' IN HIS OWN WORDS:

"I have been a football fan since I was a child and I already realised around the time of the Bosman ruling that football was developing in the completely wrong direction.

"The best young players were moving to the top teams; the entire competition was shifting to the advantage of the top clubs.

"The main trigger was the FIFA scandal in 2015. Alongside all those arrests I saw irregularities in numerous transfers in Portugal. More and more investors were filling the market. I started to collect data.

"The more I read, the more shocked I was. I saw how offshore companies were set up, how sports agents hid behind front men, how tax evasion was carried out on a large scale."

WINNERS

FABIO QUAGLIARELLA
Sampdoria striker equalled Gabriel Batistuta's record of scoring in 11 consecutive Serie A games and was also called up for an Italy training camp.

JUVENTUS
Reached the second week of February as the only unbeaten side in any of Europe's top five leagues.

QATAR
Beat Japan 3-1 in the Asian Cup Final to become continental champions for the first time.

LOSERS

THIERRY HENRY
Sacked by Ligue 1 strugglers Monaco after winning just four games in his first job as a head coach.

CLUB AFRICAIN
The Tunisian side's 8-0 loss to TP Mazembe was a record defeat in the CAF Champions League group stage.

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR
Without a trophy for 11 years, they were knocked out of the League Cup and FA Cup in the space of three days by London rivals Chelsea and Crystal Palace respectively.

"We only got news at the weekend that they were looking into a new nomination ...sadly Gordon died 48 hours later"

Former Stoke City team-mate Terry Conroy on the administrative error that saw Gordon Banks miss out on a knighthood in the New Year's Honours list

OBITUARIES

Gordon BANKS (1937-2019)

England's ever-dwindling band of 1966 World Cup-winners has been reduced to seven with the death, at the age of 81, of Gordon Banks, probably his country's greatest goalkeeper.

The remarkable facet of the Banks legend is that even more than 1966 he is remembered for his astonishing save from Pele in a group game in the finals in Mexico four years later.

One of the flood of tributes to Banks, from his agent Terry Banks, summed him up perfectly as "having worn his fame lightly". Banks revealed in 2015 that he was fighting kidney cancer for a second time, having lost a kidney to the disease 10 years earlier.

He had also been a high-profile and active supporter of a campaign for research into dementia.

He is survived by his wife, Ursula, whom he met during his national service in Germany in 1955, and their three children: Robert, Wendy and Julia.

Born on December 30, 1937, Banks won 73 caps for England between 1963 and 1972, when he lost an eye in a car crash. Four years later he made a brief comeback in the now-defunct North American Soccer League with Fort Lauderdale Strikers.

Hailing from Sheffield, he started with Chesterfield in March 1953 and played for their junior team in the 1956 FA Youth Cup Final. He made his first-team debut in November 1958 and was still working as a bricklayer when he was sold to Leicester City for £7,000 in July 1959.

He played in two losing FA Cup Finals, in 1961 and 1963, but was a winner in the League Cup in 1964 and then again in 1972, five years after a world-record £50,000 transfer to Stoke City.

Of the 1970 World Cup "miracle save", Pele said years later: "I scored 1,000 goals and no one remembers any of them, instead they remember the one I didn't score.

"From the moment I headed it I was sure it had gone in. I had already began to jump to celebrate the goal. Then I looked back and I couldn't believe it hadn't gone in."

Unfortunately for England in Mexico, Banks missed the quarter-final defeat against West Germany through illness and the holders lost 3-2 in extra-time after leading 2-0.

Notably, in 1966, it took 442 minutes, until the end of the semi-final against Portugal, for Banks to finally concede his first goal, with a Eusebio penalty ending a seven-match clean sheet sequence which remains an England record.

Banks' death was announced in a statement from his family: "It is with great sadness that we announce that Gordon passed away peacefully overnight.

"We are devastated to lose him but we have so many happy memories and could not have been more proud of him."

Banks is the fourth player of the England team from the 1966 World Cup Final to have died, after Bobby Moore, Ray Wilson and Alan Ball.

Tributes were led by old team-mates, with Bobby Charlton saying: "Gordon was a fantastic goalkeeper,

Winner...League Cup in 1972

Memories...with a photo of his save from Pele

Photo: Paul Currie/BPI/REX Features

"One of the greatest coaches of our time"

Alex Ferguson on Eric Harrison

Heroic...World Cup 1966

without doubt one of the best England has ever had. I was proud to call him a team-mate.

"Obviously we shared that great day in 1966 but it was more than that. Even though I was on the pitch, and have seen it many times since, I still don't know how he saved that header from Pele."

Hurst tweeted: "One of the very greatest. Thinking especially of Ursula, Julia, Wendy and Robert. Sad for football, Stoke City and for England fans."

Ex-England keeper Peter Shilton, who replaced Banks at Leicester, tweeted: "I'm devastated – today I've lost my hero."

Banks was appointed club president by Stoke in 2002 and a statue of a smiling Banks holding the Jules Rimet trophy aloft was unveiled at the ground in 2008 – in the presence of both the man himself and Pele.

Keir Radnedge

OBITUARIES

Pierre DELAUNAY (1919-2019)
UEFA's second general-secretary from 1956 to 1959 – succeeding his father, Henri Delaunay – the Frenchman oversaw the start of the European Nations Cup, which would later become the European Championship. He had also succeeded his father as general-secretary of the French Football Federation.

Jacques FERRAN (1920-2019)
One of the *L'Equipe* journalists who came up with the idea and the original format for the European Cup, he also served as Editor of *France Football* magazine.

Eric HARRISON (1938-2019)
The former Manchester United youth coach credited with developing the "class of '92" and leading the club to FA Youth Cup victories in 1992 and 1995. He played for Halifax Town, Hartlepools United, Barrow, Southport and Scarborough, and was awarded an MBE in 2017.

Peter MIKKELSEN (1960-2019)
Danish referee who took charge of five World Cup games – two in Italy in 1990 and three in the USA in 1994 – and also took part in the 1992 European Championship in Sweden and the 1996 Euros in England. Was the winner of the World Referee of the Year Award in 1991 and 1993, and was later a UEFA referee observer and a member of the FIFA Referees Committee for many years.

Ndaye MULAMBA (1948-2019)
Scored a record nine goals for Zaire as they won the 1974 African Nations Cup and captained his country at that year's World Cup finals – where he was sent off against Yugoslavia in a case of mistaken identity. Nicknamed "Mutumbula" (the assassin), he won the 1973 African Cup of Champions Clubs with AS Vita Club.

Not me...Ndaye Mulamba is sent off

Taiwo OGUNJOBI (1953-2019)
Nigerian international defender and captain of the Shooting Stars team that reached the Final of the 1984 Africa Cup of Champions Clubs. He later served as secretary-general of his country's FA and was twice a Nigerian Football Federation presidential candidate.

Emiliano SALA (1980-2019)
The Argentinian striker died when a plane carrying him from France to Wales crashed into the English Channel. See *Eyewitness*, page 30.

In charge...referee Peter Mikkelsen books England midfielder Paul Gascoigne in a 1990 World Cup game against Belgium

Paul GARDNER

WORLDWIDE VIEW

Stats cannot explain football's beauty or its artistry

Numbers game... Chelsea crowd out David Brooks of Bournemouth

If we must have game stats could we at least have intelligent ones?

The more game statistics I see, the more irritated I get because I'm never sure what these figures are trying to tell me. I've seen a set of stats that includes, as a category, "clearances". What the heck is a clearance? A hefty whack, into touch probably. Is that a positive or a negative stat?

By way of introduction that's a frivolous touch, but I have a more serious aim. I want to question the value of the soccer stats that are currently thrust before us.

We get two versions of stats: pre-game and post-game.

If pre-game stats have any use at all, it ought to be as a guide to what is about to happen, to provide a reliable mathematical basis to work out who's going to win.

Who is going to believe that? Anyone who does will be busy filling out betting slips all day and presumably making a lot of money. A believing coach should be winning a lot of games. As none of that happens, it's worth asking: are these game stats in any sense reliable?

Let's switch to post-game stats. Take a look at the following stats and tell me who won...

TEAM A		TEAM B
32%	Possession	68%
12	Shots	11
7	Shots On Target	7
3	Corner Kicks	7
8	Fouls	6
521	Touches	901
338	Passes	716
10	Tackles	13
1	Offside	6

Team B has huge advantages in three categories: more possession, more touches and more passes. But the game-winning implication of those solid Team B stats looks iffy when you see that Team A is very slightly ahead on shots.

Nevertheless, there is that massive advantage in ball control. I mean, two thirds of the game? That has to mean something. So you pick Team B. And you are wrong. Massively wrong.

This was a Premier League game. Team A, Bournemouth, not only beat Team B, Chelsea, they beat them 4-0.

Looking again at the scoreline, a stat showing goalkeeper saves might help. Without it, we might envisage a 7-7 tie. The Premier League does not issue that stat. Maybe the Bournemouth keeper was in great form? Or maybe he didn't need to be as Chelsea's shooting was hopelessly feeble?

I've been discussing team stats, and I've been inescapably drawn into single-player stats. Now, I'm suddenly talking about the strengths and weaknesses of individual players. Which gets us where we need to be to expose the fallacy of stats.

I am not exactly doing anything original when I insist on defining soccer in terms of its players. But that is something that needs constant emphasis these days; days in which the statisticians and the computer are working to overturn that notion.

Of course, that is not their intention, but every statistic that submerges individual skills in a percentage, and every analysis that ignores artistry because it is viewed as anarchy, works to downplay the importance of players and to exult the idea of a more programmed activity.

But we've just seen how a statistical approach fails to reflect the reality of the sport. So, down with statistics? Death to statistics? Not at all. If we must have soccer stats at least let them be intelligent ones.

I have already dismissed the "clearance" category as a nonsense. "Possession" too has its problems. At the moment that stat is pretty useless, a number that is totally unreliable as a guide to anything.

But that stat can surely be refined. Possession in the opponent's half would tell us more. As for merely counting "passes", again the category needs to be broken down. The possible

Save...Bournemouth keeper Artur Boruc

categories are many: forward, sideways, back, cross-field, penetrating, in the opposing penalty area, through balls, long balls, short balls, ground balls, aerial balls, back heels, left foot, right foot. And, simply, time-wasting.

The stats I've been hardest on have been the game stats, essentially those on the Premier League website. But dig into that same website and you will find a lot of interesting stats. You'll learn that Chelsea's Marcos Alonso has hit the woodwork six times and that team-mate David Luiz has hit 35 through balls, twice as many as anyone else. And you will also find the "goalkeeper saves" category that is missing from the game stats.

These are player stats and they bring life to the numbers. It would be pleasing to think that they could be added to those arid, no-frills game summaries without making them too detailed.

The problem for the stat fans is soccer

> If we must have soccer stats at least let them be intelligent ones

is an activity that bristles with small but vital individual details – touches, fakes, sudden moves, flashes of brilliance – that are always going to make life difficult for those who want to break it down into a list of definable and reliable categories. And laughing from on high at this impertinent attempt to impose order on reality is the great anti-stat: luck.

I suppose it may be possible to measure luck. To create a "fortune" stat, a zero-to-10 scale that would include things like near misses and miskicks, even the impact of referee decisions. But it would be a unique stat. It would measure an important factor in all games, yet unlike most of the other stats it could never pose as a key to understanding – or coaching – the game. After all, you don't "correct" luck.

It would be there – it is there – as a permanent mocking reminder that soccer is a joyous human activity, not a dry mathematical one. WS

REPORTS WE COULDN'T MAKE UP

Going down... Jose Mourinho

1 MOURINHO TAKES A TUMBLE

Former Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho got more than he bargained for when he was asked to make the ceremonial puck drop at a Kontinental Hockey League ice hockey game between Avangard Omsk and SKA Saint Petersburg in Russia.

After dropping the puck, Mourinho tried to retreat back to his seat but tripped up on the red carpet and took a tumble, much to the delight of the packed arena.

He was helped back to his feet by SKA captain Pavel Datsyuk.

2 TONGAN FAMILY SUCCESS

Father and son Pua and Tuia Falepapalangi scored four goals between them for Tongan club Lotoha'apai United in their OFC Champions League encounter against American Samoa's Pago Youth. Tonga under-20 international Tuia scored a hat-trick, with dad Pua netting the other.

Short reign... Muhsin Ertugral

3 PROTEST OVER RACIST REF

Italian non-league side Serino walked off during a game after their Senegalese goalkeeper was racially abused – by the referee.

Gueye Ass Dia and his team-mates made their protest after the official allegedly made a derogatory remark during a fixture against Real Sarno.

4 A MONTH A LONG TIME IN FOOTBALL

South African PSL club Maritzburg United sacked coach Muhsin Ertugral after a month in charge. Appointed on December 28 he was fired on January 28.

"It was a disastrous month," said chairman Farook Kadodia. "The job was disastrous. In his interests and our interests, we need to part ways."

5 SORRY, SIR

On picking up his second yellow card against Crystal Palace, Liverpool's James Milner was sent off by referee Jon Moss – who used to be the 33-year-old's PE teacher at Westbrook Lane Primary School in Leeds.

Must do better... James Milner

"Piatek's a guy of few words. He's a bit like Robocop. All he says is 'I want to score, I want to score'"

Milan coach Gennaro Gattuso pays tribute to his new signing

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

IN

Return...Sinisa Mihajlovic

EUROPE

SINISA MIHAJLOVIC, who coached the Serie A side in the 2008-09 season, returned to Bologna after they sacked Filippo Inzaghi.

Hanover replaced Andre Breitenreiter with **THOMAS DOLL**, while Augsburg appointed former Germany goalkeeper **JENS LEHMANN** as assistant coach. Ex-international midfielder **THOMAS HITZLSPERGER** was appointed sporting director of Stuttgart.

Without a club since leaving LA Galaxy in November, 38-year-old defender **ASHLEY COLE** rejoined former England and Chelsea team-mate Frank Lampard, who is now manager of Championship side Derby County.

Bottom of the Premier League, Huddersfield Town appointed **JAN SIEWERT** as manager following David Wagner's decision to stand down.

Jose's man ...Rui Faria

Former Liverpool and Switzerland centre-back **STEPHANE HENCHOZ** was appointed coach of Neuchatel Xamax.

PAUL HECKINGBOTTOM replaced Neil Lennon at Hibernian, while **BRIAN RICE** took charge of Scottish Premiership strugglers Hamilton Academical.

Sacked in December, **JAVIER CALLEJA** returned to La Liga strugglers Villarreal after they axed his replacement, Luis Garcia.

Czech coach **MICHAL BILEK** replaced Stanimir Stoilov in charge of Kazakhstan's national side.

JANUARY TRANSFER WINDOW TOP DEALS

Monterrey...Meza

PSG...Paredes

Milan...Paqueta

€64m **Christian Pulisic** (B Dortmund, Ger, to Chelsea, Eng)
€47m **Leandro Paredes** (Zenit, Rus, to Paris Saint-Germain, Fra)
€42m **Paulinho** (Barcelona, Spa, to Guangzhou Evergrande, Chn)
€35m **Shoya Nakajima** (Portimonense, Por, to Al Duhail, Qat)
€35m **Lucas Paqueta** (Flamengo, Bra, to Milan, Ita)
€35m **Krzysztof Piatek** (Genoa, Ita, to Milan, Ita)
€24m **Miguel Almiron** (Atlanta United, USA, to Newcastle United, Eng)
€21.2m **Dominic Solanke** (Liverpool, Eng, to Bournemouth, Eng)
€20.5m **Jonny Otto** (Atletico Madrid, Spa, to Wolves, Eng)
€20m **Marek Hamsik** (Napoli, Ita, to Dalian Yifang, Chn)
€17.3m **Brahim Diaz** (Man City, Eng, to Real Madrid, Spa)
€17m **Emiliano Sala** (Nantes, Fra, to Cardiff City, Eng)
€16.5m **Stefano Sturaro** (Juventus, Ita, to Genoa, Ita)
€15m **Leonardo Balerdi** (Boca, Arg, to Borussia Dortmund, Ger)
€15m **Wilmar Barrios** (Boca Juniors, Arg, to Zenit, Rus)
€15m **Giorgian De Arrascaeta** (Cruzeiro, Bra, to Flamengo, Bra)
€15m **Amadou Haidara** (RB Salzburg, Aut, to RB Leipzig, Ger)
€14m **Diego Lainez** (Club America, Mex, to Real Betis, Spa)
€13.6m **Chris Mepham** (Brentford, Eng, to Bournemouth, Eng)
€13.2m **Gonzalo Martinez** (River Plate, Arg, to Atlanta United, USA)
€13.1m **Maximiliano Meza** (Independiente, Arg, to Monterrey, Mex)
€12.5m **Mousa Dembele** (Tottenham, Eng, to Guangzhou R&F, Chn)
€12m **Benik Afobe** (Wolverhampton Wanderers, Eng, to Stoke City, Eng)
€12m **Sardar Azmoun** (Rubin Kazan, Rus, to Zenit, Rus)
€12m **Marouane Fellaini** (Manchester United, Eng, to Shandong Luneng, Chn)
€12m **Manolo Gabbiadini** (Southampton, Eng, to Sampdoria, Ita)
€12m **Hamed Junior Traore** (Empoli, Ita, to Fiorentina, Ita)
€11m **Fode Ballo-Toure** (Lille, Fra, to Monaco, Fra)
€11m **Ozan Kabak** (Galatasaray, Tur, to Stuttgart, Ger)
€11m **Rabbi Matondo** (Manchester City, Eng, to Schalke, Ger)
€11m **Maximilian Wober** (Ajax, Hol, to Sevilla, Spa)
€10.6m **Victor Davila** (Necaxa, Mex, to Pachuca, Mex)
€10.6m **Orbelin Pineda** (Guadalajara, Mex, to Cruz Azul, Mex)
€10m **Alphonso Davies** (Vancouver Whitecaps, USA, to Bayern Munich, Ger)
€10m **Vincente Iborra** (Leicester City, Eng, to Villarreal, Spa)
€10m **Aleksandar Prijovic** (PAOK, Gre, to Al Ittihad, Sau)
€10m **Yaroslav Rakitskiy** (Shakhtar Donetsk, Ukr, to Zenit, Rus)

"I know a lot of their players. Above all, the one at Tottenham"

Chile coach Reinaldo Rueda mistakes 2019 Copa America group opponents Japan for South Korea

Appointments, sackings and loans

Second chance...Leonardo Jardim has another opportunity to keep Monaco in Ligue 1

Jardim back at Monaco after Henry fails

Monaco reappointed **LEONARDO JARDIM** as coach in place of **THIERRY HENRY**, the man who replaced him in October.

Former Monaco player Henry lasted 104 days in charge, winning only two Ligue 1 games and failing to lift the club out of the relegation zone.

Jardim, who guided Monaco to the 2017 French title, received a €8m pay-off when he left after the club's poor start to the season.

SOUTH AMERICA

CARLOS QUEIROZ left Iran after the Asian Cup and took charge of Colombia.

CONCACAF

Costa Rican Clausura champions Deportivo Saprissa appointed a new coach in **WALTER CENTENO**, who holds the national record with 137 caps.

Change...Carlos Queiroz has gone to Colombia

Argentina's **MARTIN PALERMO** was named coach of Mexico's Pachuca.

AFRICA

Confederation Cup holders Raja of Morocco appointed Frenchman **PATRICE CARTERON** as coach.

IMAMA AMAPAKABO was named coach of Nigeria's under-23 side while Salisu Yusuf serves a one-year ban.

ANDREW CASA MBUNGO became Kenyan Premier League side AFC Leopards' third coach in three months.

ASIA

Reigning Qatar Stars League champions Al Duhail appointed Jose Mourinho's former long-term assistant **RUI FARIA** as coach.

Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli appointed Uruguayan **JORGE FOSSATI** as coach following the departure of Paulo Guede.

OUT

Gone...Lippi

EUROPE

Turkey terminated the contract of Romanian coach **MIRCEA LUCESCU**.

Having led Feyenoord to their first Eredivisie title in 18 years two seasons ago, **GIOVANNI VAN BRONCKHORST** will step down as coach in the summer.

SOUTH AMERICA

JUAN CARLOS OSORIO stood down as coach of Paraguay.

CONCACAF

Colorado Rapids goalkeeper **TIM HOWARD**, who won 121 caps for the USA, will retire at the end of the season.

AFRICA

CHIHEB ELLILI resigned as coach of Club Africain following the Tunisian side's 8-0 loss to TP Mazembe of DR Congo in the CAF Champions League.

ASIA

MARCELLO LIPPI quit his role in charge of China following their exit at the Asian Cup, while **JUAN ANTONIO PIZZI** stepped down as coach of Saudi Arabia. Oman's **PIM VERBEEK** also quit after the tournament and announced he would now retire from coaching.

Newcastle United midfielder **KI SUNG-YUENG**, who made 110 appearances for South Korea, announced his retirement from international football.

Planning ahead... Van Bronckhorst

Brian GLANVILLE

THE VOICE OF FOOTBALL

Number one... Gordon Banks

Gordon Banks: a goalkeeper of strength, courage and agility

That outstanding England goalkeeper, Gordon Banks, will stay long in the mind for a stupendous save and a mysterious episode of food poisoning.

He once told me that Alf Ramsey convinced him that, after he had let in a long-range, left-footed Brazilian free-kick at Wembley, his "mind's not got to wander". Nor in future would it.

The save he made from Pele's point-blank header in the 1970 World Cup finals in Guadalajara stays vividly in the mind. So, alas, does the memory of seeing him, early in the morning of a World Cup quarter-final versus Germany in Leon, walking shakily across the grass on the arm of the England doctor.

Somehow or other he had become subject to food poisoning. No one else in the England squad had suffered thus. So it was that the Germans won a match they would surely have lost had Banks been playing. Peter Bonetti, who took his place, was sadly fallible.

In person, Banks had modesty and charm. A Sheffield man who found fame at Leicester City, he had strength, courage and agility.

Stupendous...saving a header from Pele

Memories of Hugh McIlvanney

Could Hugh McIlvanney, sadly deceased, have saved the *Daily Express*?

It may seem a curious question after the demise of a supremely accomplished sports writer who did so much for *The Observer* and later *The Sunday Times*, but it seems largely to be forgotten that he briefly left *The Observer* for the *Daily Express*, then a hugely successful paper but with a sports columnist shamelessly addicted to invention.

Hugh's brief was to cover events other than sport but he was out of his essential territory. It didn't work and he went back to distinguish himself at *The Observer*. Yet he could have written a superb column for the *Express*, which would later go into steep decline losing millions of readers.

Notorious, although he and the paper got away with it, was Desmond Hackett's account of the 1954 "Battle of Berne", of how he was manhandled on the pitch and shepherded the wife of the English referee Arthur Ellis to safety – when in fact he never left the press box.

The *Express* didn't care. They paid for him to buy a new suit, a new watch and receive a bonus.

A writer as totally honest as Hugh would never have stooped to such stratagems. If he was essentially a sports journalist, his equally gifted brother William was an accomplished novelist. Scions of a Kilmarnock coal-miner family, they so splendidly took wing as writers.

On boxing, football and racing, Hugh was an outstanding and perceptive commentator.

Outstanding...Hugh McIlvanney

Family...Shahid Khan behind his son, Tony

Can the Khans fix Fulham? Probably not

"If it ain't broke don't fix it" has always been sound American advice. But last summer Fulham, deservedly promoted to the top division, controversially entrusted their transfer policy to the son of their millionaire owner, Shahid Khan.

The consequences have been disastrous. True, Fulham needed to improve their squad, but the basis of at least a decent season was surely there. Instead, a vast £100million was spent, or misspent, with the owner's son, Tony, reportedly calling the tune.

Fulham's season has been terrible, so much so that it is hard to see them avoiding relegation.

The present season was young when they sacked Slavisa Jokanovic, a manager who had served them well, got them promoted and had then been arguably left with the bleak heritage of the owner's son.

He was replaced, but surely too late for salvation, by Claudio Ranieri, alias "The Tinkerman", notorious for the way he chopped and changed his teams but ever to be remembered as the man who took unfancied Leicester City to the title.

He seemed strangely in error in an early game when stationing Tom Cairney, the left-footed life and soul of the Fulham midfield, out on the right wing, even if it lasted only until half-time. Recently there has been no Cairney in the team, nor the electric teenaged left-flanker Ryan Sessegnon.

The previous owner of the club, Mohamed Al Fayed, for all his controversial background in business, limited his self-indulgence to coming across the field before a home game swinging a Fulham scarf.

Would Ranieri, having taken the team down, whether or not it was his fault, be the one to lead them up again?

A wholly new broom might be a good idea at Craven Cottage. And Khan junior should be made to keep his fingers off the transfer market.

Nantes in contempt of human decency

Scarcely had the Argentinian attacker Emiliano Sala drowned in the Channel, where his plane had crashed, than his previous club, Nantes, were demanding the first third of his transfer fee from Cardiff City. Legally and technically they were arguably right, but in human terms they are surely contemptible.

One would suggest that a reasonable compromise would be for Cardiff to pay half the agreed £15million fee. After all, he had yet to kick a ball for them.

No sentiment in business, we have always been told. And in football?

Respects...Nantes pay tribute to former player Emiliano Sala

Almiron too late?

Have Newcastle United gambled successfully in paying a record fee for Miguel Almiron? The Paraguayan international striker comes to them after two seasons in the USA's MLS, costing £21million from Atlanta. But no matter how talented he may be, that is a far less demanding world than the one he now enters in the Premier League.

Given his evident talents he is probably bound to adjust in time, but how long will it take him?

● Read Brian Glanville's weekly online column at worldsoccer.com

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NEW RELEASES

NIKE BLACK LUX

Featuring sleek black and gold colourways for each of the Phantom VSN, Phantom VNM, Mercurial, and Tiempo, Nike's new Black Lux collection is as premium as they come.

- Nike collection available online from £30

Nike Tiempo Legend VII Elite FG
QR: 197898 - **£190**

Nike Mercurial Superfly VI Elite FG
QR: 197870 - **£230**

Nike Phantom VNM Elite FG
QR: 197847 - **£220**

Nike Phantom VSN Elite DF FG
QR: 197863 - **£230**

NEW RELEASES

BOOTROOM

It's a bumper month for new releases, with all the major brands dropping winter-friendly black boots. From the adidas Archetic Pack to PUMA's Eclipse collection, there's something here for everyone.

- Collections available online from £18

adidas Predator 19+ FG
QR: 195676 - **£230**

adidas Nemeziz 18+ FG
QR: 195704 - **£230**

adidas X 18+ FG
QR: 195692 - **£230**

adidas Copa 19+ FG
QR: 197800 - **£220**

Puma Future AMO 19.1 Netfit FG/AG
QR: 201717 - **£185**

Puma Future 19.1 Netfit FG/AG
QR: 192283 - **£180**

New Balance Furon V5 Pro FG
QR: 198617 - **£160**

New Balance Tekela V1 Pro FG
QR: 198604 - **£160**

eye witness

John Duerden in Abu Dhabi

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Qatar youngsters win the Asian Cup

Both on and off the pitch, the 2019 Asian Cup was all about Qatar, with few nations and eventual champions dominating a tournament's narrative quite so much.

Winning the trophy for the first time, their success was fully deserved as they scored 19 goals and conceded just once along the way, beating continental powerhouses Saudi Arabia, South Korea and, in the Final, Japan.

Going into the tournament there was an appreciation that the 2022 World Cup hosts had improved under Spanish coach Felix Sanchez following a disappointing effort to qualify for Russia 2018. A November win over Switzerland and a draw with Iceland raised eyebrows and expectations, but a semi-final place would have been wholeheartedly accepted beforehand.

Having spent years working with various youth teams at the Aspire Academy in Doha, Sanchez knew his young side inside out, with half of the squad aged 22 and under. Happy to hit on the counter-attack, and to do so with a ruthless streak that is rare in Asia, Qatar were the best and most consistent ▸

Historic...Qatar celebrate a first continental title

AFC
ASIAN
CUP
QFA

team in the tournament.

Concerns that expanding the finals from 16 teams to 24 would impact negatively did not really hold true; and although the quality at the top was patchy, the mid-ranking teams showed signs of improvement.

Of the three first-timers, Kyrgyzstan made the knockout stage, Philippines were competitive and only Yemen struggled – but with almost half of their squad still based and unable to play in the war-torn country, that is understandable.

Of the other outsiders, India thrashed Thailand 4-1 and only missed out on the knockout stage after conceding an injury-time penalty to Bahrain, who pushed South Korea all the way in their last-16 clash. Jordan beat holders Australia and Palestine picked up a first point, though a talented Syria team disappointed.

Thailand recovered from their opening loss to qualify for last 16, where they were joined by Vietnam to give Southeast Asia two representatives in the knockout stage. Vietnam's young side are one of the fastest improving teams in Asia and they made it to the last eight before narrowly losing 1-0 to Japan.

It is always hard to lose a semi-final, but doing so in your own capital against a fierce rival was especially painful for UAE

Apart from Vietnam, the quarter-final stage had a familiar look, despite the lack of fluency from some of the bigger sides.

Australia, who were struggling with injuries to key players such as Aaron Mooy, only scored in two of their five games and went out to hosts United Arab Emirates, while South Korea had lots of possession throughout the tournament but suffered their age-old problem of not taking their chances. The arrival of Son Heung-min after the first two games briefly lifted the team but the Tottenham Hotspur forward looked tired, frustrated and – as is often the case for his country – unlike the seemingly carefree star who sparkles in the English Premier League.

Apathy...empty seats at Japan's game against Oman

China struggled and Marcello Lippi returned to Italy with little to show for his time in charge. Picking the oldest squad in Asian Cup history, at 29.2 years, suggested that the former World Cup-winning boss had little faith in the younger generation.

Along with Qatar, Iran looked good early on and, with no goals conceded, Asia's highest-ranked team went past Oman and China to book a semi-final spot against Japan.

This was the titanic showdown the tournament had been waiting for. Japan had taken time to get going and under new coach Hajime Moriyasu showed a more pragmatic side. Against Saudi Arabia, in the second round, they won with just 24 per cent of possession – an unbelievable statistic and unheard of for a team that has been known for its passing game for years. However, they produced by far their best performance in the last four to beat Iran 3-0.

The other semi was an all West Asian affair. Hosts UAE had toyed with the idea of firing coach Alberto Zaccheroni before it all started due to poor results and performances, but somehow they made it to the semi-finals before being swept

Home support...more than 38,000 watched the host's semi-final game at Abu Dhabi's Mohammed bin Zayed Stadium

Fast improving...Vietnam (in red) take on Japan

aside 4-0 by Qatar.

Watched by over 38,000, it was the biggest attendance of the tournament – but there were too many games with too many empty seats in a country where fans often prefer to watch matches in a cafe than a stadium. Qatar's group stage clash with North Korea had an official attendance of 452.

That was just one effect of the blockade of Qatar by UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Bahrain that came into effect in 2017. With Qatar accused of supporting terrorism, among other things, the lack of diplomatic relations made it hard for Qatari fans to make the journey. Against North Korea there seemed to be just one: a South Korean woman with an affection for the country.

Ahead of the semi-finals, the Abu Dhabi Sports Council bought most of the tickets and then handed them out to local fans for free. This was ostensibly to fill the stadium, but many felt it was also a way to stop any Qatari fans, or those sympathetic to Qatar, getting in.

Qatar, though, were too good for the hosts – and their players were on the receiving end of shoes and water bottles thrown by some home fans as the visitors celebrated their goals.

It is always hard to lose a semi-final, but doing so in your own capital against a fierce new rival was especially painful.

Just a day before the Final, United Arab Emirates made an official complaint to the AFC that Qatar was fielding ineligible players. It was alleged that although star striker Almoez Ali and impressive defender Bassam Al Rawi had spent years living in the country, their close family members, as was claimed, had not actually been born in Qatar.

Under FIFA rules this could be a problem, although both had played at the Under-20 World Cup and in past international tournaments. The AFC dismissed the complaints just hours before kick-off, although the matter is likely to be taken further by the UAE FA.

Not that Qatar looked concerned against Japan. Goals from Ali and midfielder Abdulaziz Hatem put them ahead against the four-time champions, who were struggling badly. Japan pulled a goal back in the second half but Qatar restored their two-goal cushion with a late and disputed penalty – with the standard of refereeing another talking point of the tournament.

While the 2019 Asian Cup was far from a classic, Qatar deserved to win and they can look forward to the future with renewed confidence.

And as guests in Brazil at the Copa America this summer, their group rivals Argentina, Colombia and Paraguay ought to be a little warier. WS

Displeasure...UAE fans throw shoes and water bottles

Ali: Qatar's controversial new star

The Asian Cup proved tournaments are still a great place to catapult names onto the global stage, and there were a number of impressive performers in the Qatari ranks.

Akram Afif managed 10 assists before clinching the trophy with a late penalty in the Final, and the emergence of Tarek Salman and Bassam Al Rawi suggests the future is bright. Yet it is Almoez Ali who was the standout. By the end of the tournament he had a golden boot, an MVP award, a signed Barcelona shirt from Lionel Messi and interest from a number of big European clubs.

Born in Sudan but a resident of Doha since he was seven, Ali scored his first goal of the tournament in the opening win over Lebanon and then never really stopped. His ninth, a new record for the finals, came in the Final against Japan.

Impressive ...Almoez Ali

Receiving the ball in the area with his back to goal, and closely watched by defender Maya Yoshida, he flicked the ball up into the air twice and then scored with a scissors kick. He also hit North Korea for four, got both goals in a politically charged 2-0 win over Saudi Arabia and then netted against UAE in the semi-finals.

Two-footed and quick, he helped Qatar win the Asian under-19 title in 2014 and a year later he was off to the Under-20 World Cup. The sequence continued as he ended the 2016 AFC Under-23 Championship as top scorer with six goals.

By that time he was already in Europe. Starting out in the youth ranks at Belgium's Eupen, he had a short spell with Linz in Austria and then Spain's lower leagues before returning to Qatar to play for Al Duhail, the country's leading club, in 2016.

"I expected to score goals," he says of the 2019 Asian Cup. "But I didn't expect to score nine. I was expecting three or four. Thankfully the team helped me score many times."

BRIGADE
BRIGADE

Howard Johnson reports

FRANCE

From tragedy to farce

Arguments about money overshadow mourning for Argentinian striker

The sad loss of Argentinian striker Emiliano Sala and British pilot David Ibbotson in an air accident on January 21 led to an outpouring of grief on both sides of the Channel, with the ripples spreading far and wide as the football world paid tribute to the 28-year-old footballer.

Yet even before Sala's body had been recovered from the wreckage of the Piper PA-46 Malibu light aircraft in which he had been travelling from France to Wales, football's harsher side had begun to show itself.

BBC Wales revealed that French club Nantes, who had sold Sala to Cardiff City for €17million on January 19, were demanding the first of three payment instalments agreed for the player.

In an article on their website, French TV news channel LCI quickly captured the general mood when they wrote of the affair in a piece entitled *Death of Emiliano Sala: after the human drama, now it's about big money*.

If the knee-jerk reaction to a subject as grubby as money in such tragic circumstances is one of distaste if not revulsion, the French media has nonetheless been careful in its reaction to the supposed spat. As the article on the LCI website was at pains to point out, "on paper, The Bluebirds are obliged to pay the fee to the French club because a contract was signed, but things are more sensitive and complex than they might at first appear".

France's biggest daily sports paper, *L'Équipe*, managed to get hold of Cardiff chairman Mehmet Dalman on the evening the story broke for a short interview. A wary Dalman confirmed that Nantes had sent an invoice for a first payment of €6m, but wouldn't comment on Nantes' attitude while adding: "I don't think Cardiff have said that we're not going to pay."

A number of French media outlets confirmed that the official paperwork for the Sala transfer was completed by FIFA on the afternoon of January 21, "a few hours before the tragic accident". They also reported that an invoice had been generated automatically by FIFA's International Transfer Matching System, an online platform that "introduced standardisation and enhanced transparency based on FIFA's regulations on the status and transfer of players".

According to agreed norms, Nantes

Tribute...Nantes fans (left) pay their respects to Emiliano Sala (above) who had left to join Cardiff City

Remembered...Sala scored 48 goals in 133 games for Nantes

should have received the first payment by the end of January, but by early February nothing had arrived. It was this lack of payment that prompted Nantes to contact Cardiff on February 6, giving the Welsh club 10 days to settle the bill, while apparently threatening legal action if the sum wasn't transferred.

In the short piece in *L'Équipe*, Dalman claimed that it would be inappropriate to comment on the demand while a body in the plane's wreckage – at the time unidentified – had yet to be recovered. For their part, Nantes turned to two lawyers to study the affair with a view to taking legal action also involving FIFA if payment wasn't forthcoming.

So why are Cardiff reluctant to cede this first payment to Nantes? According to the French press the Welsh outfit are themselves investigating whether there has been negligence on the part of those involved in organising the fatal flight and, if so, to establish what responsibility each party should bear. This in itself doesn't seem unreasonable given the fees involved and the fact that Sala didn't make a single appearance for the club.

The fee for the player was €17m, but including agents' commissions, bonuses and three years of salary the total figure is estimated at around double that sum. According to *France Football*, Cardiff's insurance covering the deal only runs to half that amount. If that's true, Cardiff stand to lose €17m on the deal, so under these circumstances it's hardly surprising that the club want some legal clarification before handing any money over.

For their part, Nantes have legal responsibilities towards another club, Bordeaux, the first French team Sala joined, in 2010, at the age of 20.

When Bordeaux sold the Argentinian to Nantes in July 2015 they inserted a 50 per cent sell-on clause into the deal, which means they are now entitled to €8.5m from the selling club.

Despite initial newspaper reports in France that Bordeaux had asked for the money, the club issued an official statement on January 27 denying that this was the case.

What's more, it's also been reported that the Argentinian clubs and academies where Sala started his career are also entitled to five per cent of the fee.

Grief...Cardiff's Neil Warnock

Of course, all these issues of money will need to be sorted in the end. But it's also important to remember that there have been huge outpourings of genuine grief over Sala's death.

Both Cardiff City manager Neil Warnock and Nantes boss Vahid Halilhodzic were reduced to tears by the events, Nantes have retired Sala's number nine shirt and Paris Saint-Germain striker Kylian Mbappe donated €60,000 to the searches for Sala and pilot Ibbotson.

Nantes sold all their remaining tickets for the club's game against Nimes on February 10 at €9 and wore a black kit emblazoned with Sala's name in order to pay homage to their former player in a full stadium. WS

> Both Cardiff manager Neil Warnock and Nantes boss Vahid Halilhodzic were reduced to tears by events

Homage...Nantes have retired Sala's number nine shirt

Agent McKay under scrutiny

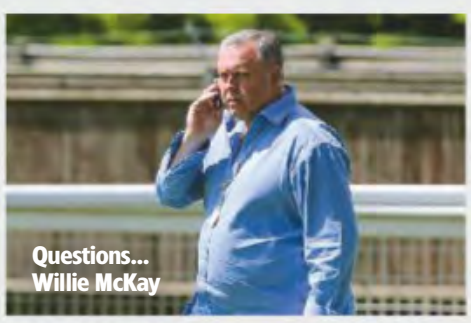
The role of British agent Willie Mckay in Emiliano Sala's transfer from Nantes to Cardiff City has come under scrutiny since the tragic plane crash after it emerged that the Monaco-based businessman had approached Nantes to request the right to negotiate a transfer on the club's behalf.

McKay admitted in an anterview with *L'Equipe*: "If I had never asked Nantes for a mandate to negotiate about Sala's transfer, he would still be among us."

In an email published by *L'Equipe*, McKay had pitched the transfer to Sala by admitting that false stories had been placed, linking Sala with a move to the Premier League.

"As far as you are concerned, we have talked to all the clubs, including Manchester, Chelsea, Liverpool. We think you could end up in such clubs," McKay wrote to Sala.

"It's been said that Cardiff does not interest you. But that is probably our mistake, because we 'leaked' in the media that other clubs like West Ham and Everton want you. Just to stimulate the interest in you."



Questions... Willie McKay

Questions also remain about ownership of the plane which took Sala across the Channel. The flight was reportedly arranged by McKay but the aircraft was registered in the United States to unnamed owners.

Hakeem Al Araibi

Refugee caught up in extradition row

The business of football can be brutal at times. Yet the game can also be a force for good. This was underscored by the case of little-known player Hakeem Al Araibi, a refugee who got caught up in an extradition tug-of-war between his native Bahrain, Thailand and Australia.

Al Araibi's story starts with the Arab Spring protests, during which he was accused of vandalising a police station in Bahrain in 2012. In his defence, Al Araibi says he was playing in a Bahraini Premier League game for Al Shabab at the time of the alleged crime – a claim supported by fact that the match was being shown live on TV.

Despite this, he was sentenced by Bahrain to 10 years in jail in absentia after he fled to Australia, where he was granted refugee status in 2017.

A trip to Thailand in November 2018 was supposed to be a honeymoon holiday with his wife. Instead, it turned into a nightmare.

An Interpol "red notice" – initially thought to have been raised in error by Australia – alerted Thailand to his travel plans, even though he had protected status as a refugee. A statement from the Australian Embassy in Thailand later confirmed it was Bahrain that had issued the notice, on November 8.

And so, despite having checked with the Australian authorities that he was safe to travel, Al Araibi was arrested on arrival in Bangkok and detained for over

Home...Craig Foster (left) greets Al Araibi at Melbourne Airport

In chains...attending court in Bangkok

two months while Bahrain applied for his extradition to answer the historical charges. Al Araibi claimed he would be tortured into a confession if sent back.

Meanwhile, back in Australia, something was stirring. Led by former international Craig Foster, the football community rallied around Al Araibi's cause. Social-media campaigns, petitions and rallies all built publicity around the case of the semi-pro footballer, whose club side – Pascoe Vale in the regional league of Victoria – had never seen media interest like it.

Under pressure from campaigners, the Australian prime minister Scott Morrison contacted his Thai counterpart, FIFA and the IOC put out statements requesting his release, and high-profile football personalities such as Robbie Fowler and Didier Drogba lent their support.

Only the AFC remained silent, even preventing questions on the topic at the Asian Cup in the UAE in January. Only after almost two months of Al Araibi's incarceration did the confederation feel compelled to speak.

The reason for the delay? AFC president Sheikh Salman was horribly conflicted. Salman not only leads Asian football, and is by extension a FIFA vice-president, but he is also a member of the Bahraini ruling family.

Salman also had history with Al Araibi. Upon his arrival in Australia in 2016 the player had spoken out against Salman in the run-up to FIFA's presidential election, in which Salman was a candidate. Al Araibi accused Salman of refusing to offer assistance with his situation, even though he claimed Salman – who was also the Bahraini FA president – knew full well he'd played for Al Shabab on the night of the police station attack.

Conflicted... Sheikh Salman

Many journalists who tried to tell Al Araibi's story – and sought comment from Salman – were issued with legal writs by the AFC president's lawyers to prevent publication. Yet enough of the story got out for many to believe that Al Araibi ultimately cost Salman the top job at FIFA.

With Al Araibi behind bars in Bangkok, AFC's belated statement of support also handed responsibility over to senior vice-president Praful Patel due to Salman's "conflict of interest".

That appeared to fly in the face of FIFA's own human-rights statutes, yet Salman will again stand for the AFC presidency in April. Only when Hakeem had arrived back on Australian soil did the AFC issue a statement that it was "extremely pleased with the decision of the courts in Thailand".

Back in Australia, Al Araibi's case was seen as a watershed moment for sport, and for football in particular. With the game increasingly in thrall to the financial muscle of Asia, would football stand up for one of their own? Or would it turn a blind eye, due to the influence wielded by regimes such as the ones in Bahrain?

Most in football passed the test, but a bigger conundrum is whether the game accepts that football and politics are inextricably intertwined. That thorny problem will have its first real test when Asia casts its electoral votes on April 6.

Can Salman continue leading football in the region when, by his own admission, he is conflicted by his relationship with the Bahraini ruling family? And what of the other candidates?

Saoud Al Mohannadi of Qatar was given a one-year suspension by FIFA in 2016 for refusing to co-operate with an inquiry into an unnamed third party. The suspension was lifted upon appeal in 2017 after the appeal committee found the evidence available was "not sufficient".

The third candidate is Mohamed Khalfan Al Romaithi of the UAE, the country which barred Qataris from attending the recent Asian Cup due to the ongoing blockade involving Qatar and its neighbours.

So much for the tournament's official slogan of "bringing Asia together".

The only people who achieved real unity were those who fought for Hakeem Al Araibi's release.

Simon Hill

Paulo Henrique Ganso

Neymar contemporary back in Brazil after Euro disappointment

Hope...Flu's new signing, Ganso

When fans of Fluminense flocked to Rio de Janeiro airport to welcome new signing Paulo Henrique Ganso, some compared it to the reception given to Ronaldinho when he joined the club in 2015. But there was, of course, one very obvious difference.

Ronaldinho was beyond any doubt a genuine world star, the biggest and most entertaining name in the global game for an all-too-brief period. What he did in a Barcelona shirt between 2004 and 2006 captivated a worldwide audience in a way that few players have ever done, storing up a vast quantity of goodwill that greets him wherever he travels.

The case of Ganso, however, is entirely different. The hopes that he generated a decade ago have never come remotely close to being realised and he returned from European football not as some conquering hero seeking to wind down his career, and bask in glories from the past, but as someone yet to prove that he can be decisive at the highest level.

He has never been a star – except, perhaps in his own mind, and certainly in the minds of some in Brazilian football who were far too quick to reach for undeserved superlatives.

The key to his story took place in the first few months of 2010.

Ganso and a teenage Neymar had a glorious time together at Santos: Neymar supplied the tricks and incisive dribbles, Ganso the elegant, left-footed poise and the killer pass. At the time, many thought Ganso was the better of the two, the one with the brighter future.

> He has joined Fluminense, not like Ronaldinho as a great of yesteryear but as a great who never was

But missing from this analysis was any sense of context. Santos were playing in the Sao Paulo state championship and practically had the field to themselves as their chief rivals – Corinthians, Palmeiras and Sao Paulo – were all giving priority to the Libertadores Cup.

Ganso and Neymar put on a show, but the standard of the opposition left a lot to be desired. Yet such evidence was at times used to draw the conclusion that Ganso was the best in the world in his position, which was a ludicrously premature verdict.

Part of the problem was the extent to which many people wanted him to be a superstar. The desire for an old-fashioned, cerebral number 10 was so huge that the wish proved stronger than the reality. And the reality, as Clarence Seedorf explained during his time in Brazil, was that Ganso was neither quick enough nor dynamic enough to operate close to goal, in a zone

where the marking would be at its tightest.

Three years in Europe proved Seedorf to be right. A succession of coaches at Sevilla found him surplus to requirements and he did little of note in a brief spell in France with Amiens.

And now he has joined Fluminense, not like Ronaldinho as a great of yesteryear but as a great who never was. He could, however, end up being much more useful to his new club.

In 2015 it should have been clear to all that Ronaldinho had little to offer the

Dynamic duo...with Neymar (left)

professional game. He appeared to have lost interest years earlier and his physical condition was no longer good enough to provide him with a platform from which to display his extraordinary talent. After just nine games he admitted defeat and ripped up his contract.

Ganso, on the other hand, should have far more to give – not least because he lacks the laurels on which he might be tempted to rest, and also because he is joining an interesting project.

Fluminense have Fernando Diniz as their coach and he is a rarity in Brazil – a man who wants to implant a bold, high-pressing, possession-based game. It is not a model for which Ganso would be seen as a natural fit, but cash-strapped Flu have had to turn to youth and so the possibility exists that Ganso will be surrounded by young players with lung power, which will open up the pitch and give him options to deliver his passes.

If the parts can all be made to fit, then Paulo Henrique Ganso could even turn out to be worthy of the welcome he received on arrival at the airport.

Tim Vickery

Zvonimir Boban

Carving out a new role at FIFA

Although the final decision is not his to take, FIFA's deputy secretary-general says there is no chance of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar being expanded to 48 teams when Council meets in March.

"To go to 48 teams would make difficulties for Qatar because of the preparations already made for 32 teams," says Boban, who won the Champions League and four Serie A titles with Milan as a player in the 1990s. "Qatar, in itself, would find it difficult to accommodate a finals with 48 teams. In that case it would be necessary to spread the matches into some other countries nearby and this brings other issues into play."

The idea of the tournament being shared with neighbouring nations is a non-starter due to the political and economic blockade of Qatar by a coalition led by Saudi Arabia and including the United Arab Emirates. And the 50-year-old Croatian sees a further obstacle, adding: "The concept of matches in other countries would cause big problems because of how the finals were awarded. Those other countries who bid, like Australia and Japan and Korea Republic or even the United States. How would they react?"

Brought into FIFA in 2016 by Gianni Infantino, Boban's appointment was initially viewed as a gesture born of the new president's obsession with "legends". But there was more to it than that and Infantino had sought the former player's opinion when he was first mulling over a bid for FIFA power.

"We talked about it, about the situation and issues," reveals Boban. "It was interesting he had asked my view.

"After he was elected he called me again and asked whether I would come on board. He said it was difficult for him as the new man at FIFA. He wanted people he knew and respected. I said OK."

The former midfielder's interest in the world of football politics only began after he stopped playing.

"When I was a player, FIFA was some sort of strange, distant organisation which had nothing to do with us," he explains. "It was just guys who showed up for the big matches and took some of the credit and maybe some of the money. Who knew?"

Boban's suspicions were not so far off the mark as far as many of the game's directors were concerned, and he accepts that the corruption issues which crushed FIFA's reputation will take "many more years to heal". He also has no qualms about confronting many of the big issues facing the game's governing body.

Of replacing the Club World Cup with a 24-team show every four years, he states: "There are many commercial organisations which organise matches for European clubs in the summer. No one should object to the Club World Cup in the summer because it will not make money just for these businesses but for the clubs and for the game of football."

As for the Nations League, he says that the UEFA experience has changed his opinion, admitting: "I was against the idea. I thought it meant only more games for the poor players. But it was a success. I was wrong. I can see that now.

"Certainly it can work around the world but this depends on the confederations. You cannot have an intercontinental tournament."

As someone who in 1990 assaulted a policemen who was attacking his side's fans in Zagreb when playing for Dinamo, Boban has made decisive choices throughout his career, both on and off the pitch.

He is his own man – and one day he may be considering even more important decisions within the game which is dearest to his heart.

Keir Radnedge

Big shots...Boban (far right) with FIFA dignitaries (from left) Marco Villiger, Gianni Infantino and Fatma Samba Diouf Samoura

> "When I was a player, FIFA was some sort of strange, distant organisation which had nothing to do with us"

Abel Xavier

Former Portugal defender is on brink of success with Mozambique

Abel Xavier's eccentricities were famous in his playing days, and while his dyed-blond hair is still neatly tied into a man bun at the back of his head, he is now resplendent in a black dinner jacket on the side of the pitch.

Despite the tropical heat, he wears this as he prowls up and down the touchline in his role as coach of Mozambique.

Although a Portugal international, notorious for giving away a penalty in the semi-final of Euro 2000 and earning a red card in the process, he was born in Mozambique – in Nampula, like Carlos Queiroz, who recently quit as Iran coach to take charge of Colombia – and he has come home to take the team to the brink of a first African Nations Cup appearance since 2010.

His team must go to Guinea-Bissau, another former Portuguese colony, and win their last Group K game at the end of March to qualify for the finals in Egypt in June – a tough task, but one that their coach is convinced can be achieved.

"I've believed from the start of these qualifiers that we have the strength in our squad to go on and qualify," says the 46-year-old who played for both Everton and Liverpool during his career.

Mozambique started the qualifying campaign with a shock win away to the 2012 African champions, Zambia, and despite letting that advantage slip they have remained in contention. "I initially selected 75 players for the senior national team, of which 40 per cent are between the ages of 19 and 23," continues Xavier. "I saw them all, I selected them without influence. The future is about youth development.

> "Mozambique is a country with a lot of problems but we certainly can compete"
>
> **Abel Xavier**

"We have tried to change the mentality in Mozambique and persuade officials that it is not like it was before. It's a country with a lot of problems but we certainly can compete. We have big names from the past as a reference and I'm convinced there are more here right now. We just need to discover them."

Pointing a finger at the administration, he adds: "I have changed a lot of things from the way they were before, because if Mozambique in the past didn't achieve there was a reason for that."

Now he has ensured a better air of professionalism around the team's logistics and says the players have responded positively, stating: "We are working in a different context and the players are very professional, very responsible. There is always the balance of the mix between players who play abroad and the local ones, and as coach you have to ensure there is the right approach from everybody."

Xavier comes to the end of his contract after the qualifiers, but if Mozambique get a place in the 24-team finals he will surely carry on with his project to bring back old glory to a country with a rich footballing history.

Mark Gleeson

Resplendent...the coach of Mozambique

Patrice-Edouard Ngaissona

CAF executive member accused of war crimes

Elected football officials at FIFA and confederation level have over the years been regarded with increasing suspicion, with many seen to be using the game to build a public profile or to profit from the riches and largesse that the sport offers.

Many of these would appear to have murky backgrounds and seem ill-fitted for service to football, yet they are still able to win the confidence of voting associations and take their place at some of the sport's top tables.

And this is indeed true of Patrice-Edouard Ngaissona, who won a surprise place on the executive committee of the Confederation of African Football in February last year.

Less than 12 months later, the president of the Central African Republic Football Federation was in the dock at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague to hear charges against him of crimes against humanity and war crimes in his home country.

According to his arrest warrant, the 51-year-old is liable for crimes committed with other perpetrators or for aiding and abetting crimes including murder, persecution, torture, extermination and using child soldiers.

Ngaissona was arrested while on a trip to France in December, travelling on a diplomatic passport, and then extradited to Holland, where his case is set to begin on June 18.

Accused...in the dock

> It seems incredulous Ngaissona won a seat on CAF's executive committee despite his reputation, or that he passed FIFA's integrity checks

Ngaissona is one of the leaders of a militant group that is accused of targeting Muslims in the inter-religious and inter-communal fighting that erupted in 2013, when predominantly Muslim Seleka rebels seized power in Central African Republic's capital, Bangui.

The violence left thousands dead and displaced hundreds of thousands more, so it therefore seems incredulous that Ngaissona won a seat on the CAF executive committee despite his reputation, or that he passed FIFA's alleged integrity checks. And he is still listed on FIFA's website as a member of the Organising Committee for the Club World Cup. CAF itself has made no comment since his arrest.

In footballing terms, Ngaissona was an unknown before he appeared on the ballot for the CAF organising committee, standing for a vacant seat in the central region against Pierre Alain Mounguengui, a former international referee who had since become president of the Gabon Football Federation

Ngaissona won 30-23, with one abstention, in the vote by CAF members.

CAF has long had a strong Muslim leadership, including the current incumbent Ahmad of Madagascar and his Cameroonian predecessor Issa Hayatou, and yet it seems oblivious to the background of the boss of Central African Republic football.

This is the latest blow to a tardy looking CAF ExCo, where allegations of financial impropriety hang not only over the head of Ahmad – the alleged recipients of money from Qatar during the 2022 World Cup bidding process – but also several of his committee.

Vice-president Celestin Omari Selemani was briefly jailed in the Democratic Republic of Congo last year in an embezzlement case, while his colleague Hasan Musa Bility of Liberia has previously been suspended and failed integrity checks.

Meanwhile, Isha Johansen is the subject of anti-corruption allegations in Sierra Leone, Danny Jordaan – who ran the South African World Cup bid – has been accused of corruption and rape in his own country, and Zambia's Kalusha Bwalya has just returned to the ExCo after a FIFA ban for accepting money from official Mohammed Bin Hammam was reduced on appeal.

Mark Gleeson

GEIC
INTERNATIONAL CHAM
BVB 09
EVONIK
NFL
THE DUKE
WILSON

American Idol

WORDS: Nick Bidwell

Chelsea's signing of the 20-year-old in the winter transfer window made him the USA's most-expensive footballer of all time

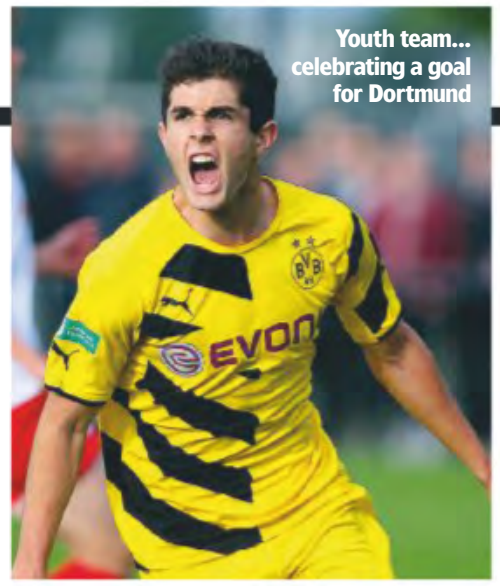
The soccer-crazy kid from Hershey in Pennsylvania had been tipped for the top right from the very start. Taking advantage of his father's coaching connections, he spent a week training at Barcelona's iconic La Masia academy as a 10-year-old and by his early teens he was an object of desire for a host of leading European sides, invited for trials by the likes of Chelsea, Porto, Villarreal, PSV and Borussia Dortmund – whose youth programme he would eventually plump for in the summer of 2014.

Prior to signing for *Die Schwarzgelben*, Christian Pulisic was a star turn with the Pennsylvania Classics and the United States' under-17 side, but initially it was international team-mate Haji Wright who attracted the attention of the Ruhr club.

In January 2014 the Germans sent a scout to watch striker Wright in action at the Aegean Cup youth tournament in Turkey, but it was the young midfielder who caught the eye. His speed, touch, athleticism and awareness convinced Dortmund to make transatlantic contact and Pulisic was quickly invited back to Europe for a trial.

As is usual in such circumstances, Dortmund rolled out the red carpet and the youngster was afforded the warmest of welcomes from the club's general manager Michael Zorc and youth-sector chiefs Lars Ricken and Eddy Boekamp.

After a tour of the club's sumptuous training facilities and repeated references to the importance of youth at the Westfalenstadion, the charm offensive worked a treat. "I kind of knew it was


Youth team... celebrating a goal for Dortmund

the right place for me," recalls Pulisic. "They really liked me. I pretty much knew that this was what I wanted."

It has since emerged that Dortmund's regional arch-rivals Schalke were also in the hunt to sign the boy wonder and the *Gelsenkirchener* reportedly held talks with his agent. By way of consolation, they would two years later seal a deal for Haji Wright, who made his first-team debut in the Bundesliga in November last year.

Although he was accompanied by his father during his first two years in Germany, Pulisic naturally experienced a few teething problems in his new surroundings. A mere 15 years old, he found himself 3,800 miles from home, spoke not a word of German and had to settle in at a local school.

"It was not easy for him," according to Dortmund youth-team coach Hannes Wolf. "He was pushed to the extreme."

A particularly frustrating aspect of his first few months in Dortmund was a decree that prevented him from playing in competitive games as he waited for his application for European citizenship to go through. With his grandfather, Mate, hailing from Croatia, he was eligible for the same passport rights and by 2015 the administrative hurdles were finally cleared and he could at last turn out for Dortmund's under-17s.

Free to finally play, he wasted no time in making a name for himself with the Black-and-Yellows, either scoring or providing an assist in each of his first four starts for the under-17s and featuring prominently as they won the 2015 national title. Usually lining up as a number 10, he formed an exceptional deep-lying attacking trident with future German under-21 international Felix Passlack, who is currently on loan at Norwich City in England, and Jacob Bruun Larsen, a Dane who scored his first goal for Dortmund's senior side in September.

Dortmund's ethos of "if you're good enough, you're old enough" speaks volumes for the ability of Pulisic, who at 16 began training with the first team. Beneath the surface he might have been awestruck but he managed to keep his emotions in check and came through the audition unscathed.

The teen's emergence coincided with Jurgen Klopp's last few months in charge of Dortmund and in February 2015 the coach told *Kicker* magazine: "[Pulisic] absolutely can play. In intensive drills in tight spaces, he didn't let himself down. It's a real sign of quality."

There was simply no stopping Pulisic and after an explosive four-month stint with the Dortmund under-19s in the autumn of 2015 he was included in the first-team squad for a winter-break trip to Dubai. On the resumption of the Bundesliga, he made his top-flight debut aged 17 years and 133 days and became the eighth youngest player in the competition's history. A couple of weeks later, Thomas Tuchel – Klopp's successor – handed him his first taste of continental action.

In late February 2016 he made his first start, lining up on the left wing against Bayer Leverkusen, and two months on a goal against Hamburg at the Westfalenstadion made him the fourth youngest Bundesliga marksman at 17 years and 212 days.

> "He's a player who never gives up. He's critical of himself and always maintains his intensity. He's composed, he's reliable. He plays to his potential under pressure"
>
> **Ex-Dortmund boss Thomas Tuchel**

Confident, though never lapsing into brazen cockiness, Pulisic continues to unfurl the coming-of-age achievements: his Champions League opening night in September 2016 versus Legia Warsaw; his first goal in that competition in a round-of-16 defeat of Benfica; a 2017 German Cup winners' medal.

"We're no longer at the point of being surprised by Christian's performances," said Tuchel at the time. "He's justified our trust in him. He's a player who never gives up. He's critical of himself and always maintains his intensity.

"He's composed, he's reliable. He plays to his potential under pressure."

Former Dortmund youth coach Wolf wholeheartedly agrees, explaining to *Kicker*: "As soon as he came to us as a 15-year-old it was clear what he was

Prospects...Pulisic (no10) and Haji Wright in action for USA under-17s against England

Timeline

OCT 20, 2015
Captains the USA and scores in a 2-2 draw with Croatia at the Under-17 World Cup in Chile.

JAN 30, 2016
Makes his Bundesliga debut in a 2-0 win against Ingolstadt, coming on as a second-half substitute for Adrian Ramos.

FEB 18, 2016
Plays in the Europa League for the first time, as a second-half sub in a 2-0 victory over Porto.

FEB 21, 2016
Starts in the Bundesliga for the first time, in a 1-0 win against Bayer Leverkusen.

MAR 29, 2016
Makes his USA debut in a 4-0 win against Guatemala as a sub and becomes the youngest American to play a World Cup qualifier.

Debut...with Thomas Tuchel after the game against Ingolstadt

all about. He's a mix of technical ability, great speed and serious attitude to his craft. That was very impressive."

Pulisic's father Mark is equally effusive in his praise of Wolf's part in his son's success, telling *Goal* website: "From the moment Christian arrived in Dortmund, he was made to feel wanted and the most important person in all this was Hannes Wolf. He really helped Christian find his feet in a new country.

"He was a trainer as well as a friend, both on and off the pitch."

Given his genealogical input there was always a strong possibility that Pulisic would one day earn a living from football as his parents, Mark and Kelley, both played collegiate soccer at George Mason University in Virginia, with Mark later turning pro and spending eight years on the books of indoor-arena side Harrisburg Heat.

Pulisic senior later ran the soccer programme at Lebanon Valley College in Pennsylvania, taking charge of Detroit Ignition in the Major Indoor Soccer League and tutoring youngsters at PA Classics, where his son played. Mark also served as a youth coach at Dortmund for 18 months, from 2015 to 2017, and was an assistant at three lower-league outfits in the US: Harrisburg City Islanders, Rochester Rhinos and

Important figure...former Dortmund youth coach Hannes Wolf

APR 17, 2016

Gets the opening goal in a 3-0 win at home to Hamburg and becomes the youngest non-German to score in the Bundesliga.

MAY 28, 2016

Scores his first goal as a senior international as the USA beat Bolivia 4-0.

SEP 2, 2016

Two goals in a 6-0 win against Saint Vincent see him become the youngest person to score in a World Cup qualifier for the USA.

MAR 8, 2017

Scores his first Champions League goal in a 4-0 victory over Benfica.

Pittsburgh Riverhounds.

Growing up in such a sports-orientated environment, it was no surprise that Pulisic came to prominence so quickly.

In late 2013 he starred for the USA under-17 side against Brazil at the Nike International Friendlies series and was voted the tournament's Most Valuable Player – at just 15. For those with their finger on the pulse of US soccer, an ascendant Pulisic was just what they expected; a case of class will out.

"I first saw him when he was probably 11 or 12 in Washington DC," USA midfielder turned national under-20 coach Tab Ramos told *Sports Illustrated* magazine. "He was playing for PA Classics against DC United in an under-14 age-group match. I was walking by and I saw someone who was so little on the field. He completely looked like someone's little brother who had wandered out onto the field. I was waiting for someone to pull him off. Then I realised he was running the show.

"He clearly was younger, smaller and did not look as though he belonged. That is, until he was around the ball. After watching the game for five minutes, you realised that everybody was playing through him. The pace of the game was completely dictated by him."

Loaned back to Dortmund for the remainder of this season by Chelsea means Pulisic won't make his Premier League debut until next term, and it feels like a moment for which he has been waiting all his life.

Next season...he joins Chelsea this summer

At the age of seven he spent 12 months with his family in Oxfordshire while his mother concentrated on her teaching-exchange business and his father studied for his UEFA A coaching badge. A big fan of Manchester United and England striker Wayne Rooney, the youngster visited a number of England's top grounds – among them Anfield, Old Trafford and White Hart Lane – and played in the junior ranks of Brackley Town, a club in the neighbouring county of Northamptonshire.

On returning to the States he had a short spell with Michigan Rush – while his dad coached Michigan Ignition – and then joined US Soccer Development Academy club PA Classics. Capped by the USA under-15s when he was 13, he scored 20 in 34 games for the under-17s and by the spring of 2016 – aged 17-and-a-half – he made his full international debut. A couple of months later he became the country's youngest-ever goalscorer, netting in a friendly victory over Bolivia in Kansas City.

"This player's potential is limitless," declared US boss Jurgen Klinsmann. "I've always said you have to write your own story and he's doing it right now. I think it's rare in America for a player to be so developed at such an early age."

Clearly someone with a lot of faith in the youngster, on the eve of the Bolivia game he even allowed Pulisic to fly back to Pennsylvania for his high-school prom.

Klinsmann's one-time assistant, the ex-Austria playmaker Andreas Herzog also is a fan, declaring: "Amazingly for one so young he is almost the complete player. He's technically very strong, is exceptional when dribbling in one-on-one duels, gets stuck in with a lot of dynamism and is sensationally quick.

"He has a flair for quick thinking, for assessing a situation and coming up with the solution."

Steve Klein, director of coaching at PA Classics, says Christian's success boils down to his talent, his mentality and the support system around him.

"I don't think you can teach a lot of the stuff he has," he told NBC Sports. "You definitely knew at an early age that he was going to be a very good player. It was just his feet. He had a sense on how to play through balls.

"For him to go over [to Dortmund] at a young age and fight with grown men, he had to have a strong character. That's where his parents have done such a good job. Not going crazy when they've seen they have a very talented player.

"There are a lot of soccer people who have kids and go nuts because they dream of what their kid is going to do and ruin them."

Pennsylvania is known as a breeding ground for some top American Football quarter-backs, such as Joe Montana, Joe Namath and Dan Marino. Now it seem soccer wizardry grows there too. WS

National service...in a friendly at Wembley in November

> "I've always said you have to write your own story and he's doing it right now"
> **Former USA national coach Jurgen Klinsmann**

MAY 27, 2017

Comes on as a half-time sub in the German Cup Final against Eintracht Frankfurt and wins the penalty that seals a 2-1 victory.

NOV 20, 2018

Is his country's youngest-ever captain, at 20 years and 63 days, in a friendly against Italy.

JAN 2, 2019

Signs for Premier League side Chelsea in a deal that will see him remain at Dortmund for the remainder of the 2018-19 season.

Christian Pulisic

the numbers game

2018 ZACK STEFFEN

2017 CHRISTIAN PULISIC

2016 JOZY ALTIDORE

2015 MICHAEL BRADLEY

2014 TIM HOWARD

USA SOCCER ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

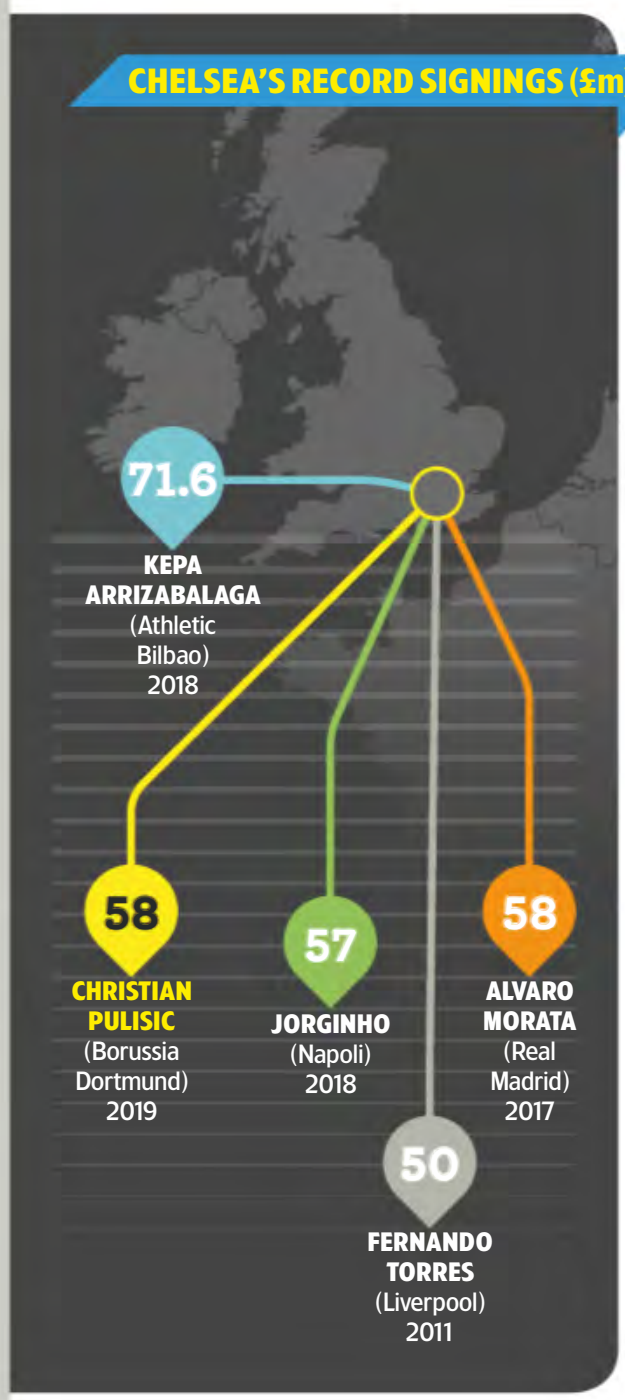
HONOURS

USA

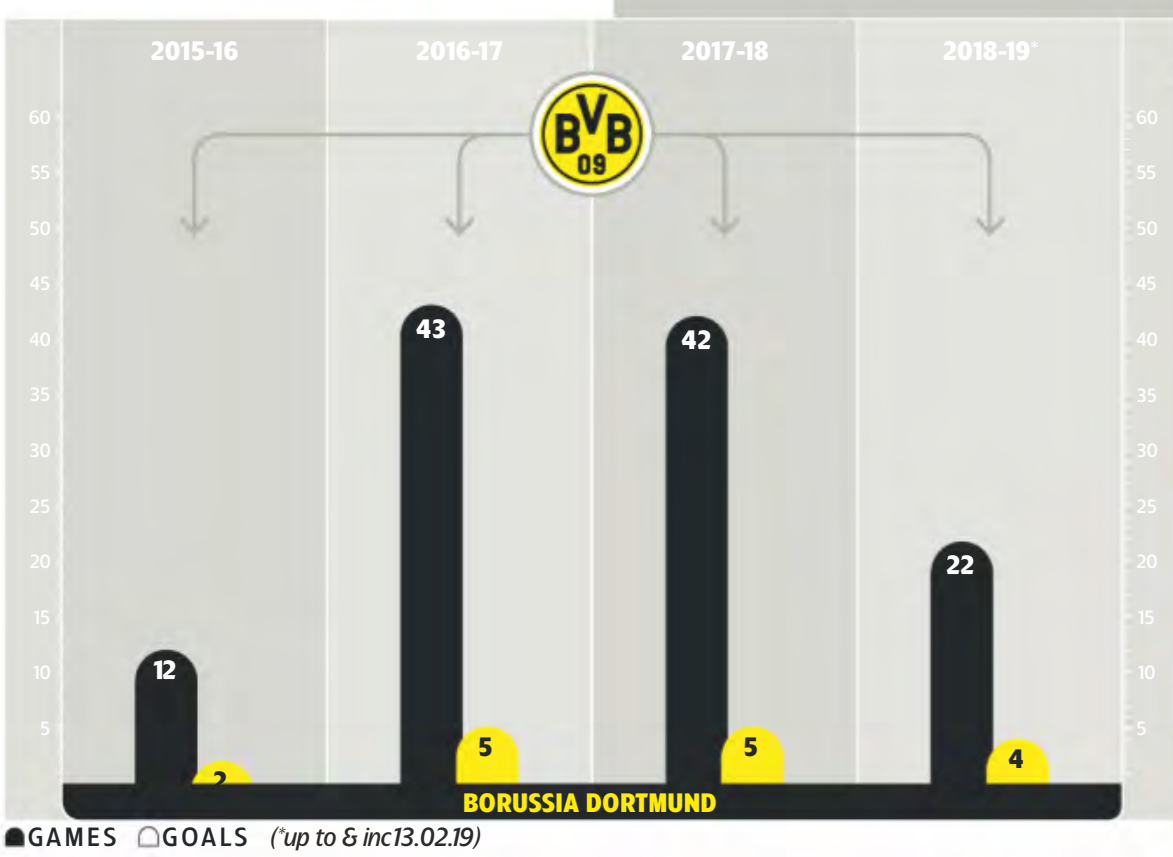
23 CAPS

9 GOALS

CHELSEA'S RECORD SIGNINGS (£m)



15 youth-team games he played for Borussia Dortmund before being promoted to the senior squad



$78m the fee for his move to Chelsea in January 2019, making him the most expensive American player of all time

FOOTBALL'S

Grass roots...Saint-Ouen, in the northern suburbs of Paris

TALENT HOT SPOTS

WORDS: Nick Bidwell and Gavin Hamilton

We turn the spotlight on the areas of Europe that are fertile breeding grounds for the game's brightest stars

Paris Suburbs
FRANCE

Where would the all-conquering French national team be without the huge contribution of its numerous Parisians? The obvious answer is in tremendous difficulty. Their World Cup-winning squad last year contained no fewer than eight players either born or brought up in the tower block suburbs of Ile-de-France (Greater Paris) and it was the same story at Euro 2016, with nine players from the environs of the capital city.

France's triumph in Russia was essentially built around a Parisian core of midfielders in Paul Pogba, N'Golo Kante and Blaise Matuidi, plus attacking boy wonder Kylian Mbappe.

Indeed, the *banlieues*, as these satellite towns are known, might have figured even more prominently at Russia 2018. Bayern Munich winger Kingsley Coman was in line for selection until struck down by injury, Paris Saint-Germain schemer Adrien Rabiot scuppered his chances with diva-like demands, and forward Anthony Martial paid the ultimate price for falling out with his Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho.

The direction of travel is clear. The France side that won the 1984 European Championship featured just one Parisian in the squad – Bordeaux left-back Thierry Tusseau. As for their triumphant World Cup group of 1998, only three were from the Ile-de-France: Thierry Henry, Patrick Vieira and Lilian Thuram.

"Around 65 per cent of current French professional footballers hail from the Parisian region, so it's normal that they make up a strong proportion of the national team," says Jean-Claude Lafargue, the director of the locally established INF Clairefontaine, the national academy.

A region of 12 million people – representing 18 per cent of the entire French population – Ile-de-France has also nurtured a plethora of non-French internationals: Portugal wing-back Raphael Guerreiro, Algeria front-runners Riyad Mahrez and Yacine Brahimi, Morocco centre-back Mehdi Benatia and Central African Republic defensive midfielder Geoffrey Kondogbia.

Not so long ago, PSG, Nantes, Lille, Rennes, Monaco, Caen, Le Havre and Lens basically used to do as they pleased in this particular recruitment market. Now they face competition from all over, with Parisian players targeted at increasingly tender ages. No longer is talent-spotting a slapdash word of mouth operation. It's structured, it's meticulous, it's serious.

"We don't just have teams from this area and France scouting here," says Franck Scanvic, a coach with amateur outfit AC Boulogne Billancourt.

"Clubs from the big European leagues are very active, as are Belgian and Dutch sides. We even have interest from more exotic countries like Macedonia, Turkey and Azerbaijan."

There are several reasons behind Ile-de-France' emergence as the most prolific of football incubators. In such disadvantaged estates, where amenities are often thin on the ground, football is an activity that can still be actively pursued. And for the preponderantly immigrant populace the game is extremely popular.

Kids can be seen kicking a ball in these parts morning, noon and night. Young *banlieusards* see a football career as one of their few escape routes from a life of marginalisation and poverty. The dream is to have the scouts come calling, turn pro and find fame and fortune.

"Youngsters from around here are more motivated than elsewhere to become professional players," says Jamel Sandjak, the president of La Ligue de Patis Ile-de-France.

Amateur clubs in the area, and their benevolent band of dedicated coaches, do wonderful youth-development work – and equally significant is the abundance of football pitches.

At the last count, they numbered a whopping 4,500.

"The quality of the Greater Paris talent pool effectively stems from the extreme density of its popular quarters," explains Nantes head of recruitment Matthieu Bideau. "The youngsters there are immersed in street football." WS

> "Youngsters from around here are more motivated than elsewhere to become professional players"
>
> **Jamel Sandjak, president of La Ligue de Paris Ile-de-France**

Champions...(from left) Paul Pogba, Blaise Matuidi and Kylian Mbappe

South London

ENGLAND

East London and the north-east of England have been the traditional breeding grounds for English footballing talent. But the England squad that won the Under-17 World Championship in 2017 contained nobody from the north-east and only one player, Rhian Brewster, from Chadwell Heath, on the East London/Essex borders

Instead there were seven – a third of the squad – with their roots in the five South London boroughs of Croydon, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark and Wandsworth.

The most well-known of the under-17 winners, Jadon Sancho, is already blazing a trail at senior international level and in the Champions League with Borussia Dortmund. Another, Chelsea's Callum Hudson-Odoi, is close to a summer move to Bayern Munich.

Sancho grew up in Camberwell, close to Reiss Nelson, the youngster who is enjoying a breakthrough season in the Bundesliga at Hoffenheim, on loan from Arsenal. Nelson attended the same school near Elephant & Castle, London Nautical, as Fulham goalkeeper Marcus Bettinelli.

Trailblazer...Jadon Sancho leads the way

> What's noticeable about the crop raised south of the Thames is the disproportionate number of skilful, attacking players

Camberwell-born Bettinelli would feature in a South London XI of current Premier League players that would also include defenders Joe Gomez (Lewisham), Nathaniel Clyne (Camberwell), Aaron Wan-Bissaka (Croydon) and Ryan Sessegnon (Wandsworth). Midfielders would include Hudson-Odoi (Wandwsorth), Ruben Loftus-Cheek (Lewisham) and Nathanial Chalobah (Lambeth).

The manager – possibly Crystal Palace-raised Gareth Southgate - would be spoilt for choice in attack, with Sancho and Nelson vying for places with Wilfried Zaha (Croydon), Ademola Lookman (Peckham), Tammy Abraham (Camberwell) and Jordon Ibe (Bermondsey).

This summer, the England team that takes part in the European Under-21 Championship in Italy could feature Croydon-born Freddie Woodman in goal as well as the likes of Abraham, Lookman, Nelson, Ryan Sessegnon, Wan Bissaka and Gomez.

South London has always produced talented footballers. Ian Wright and David Rocastle were childhood friends, while Rio Ferdinand hails from Peckham.

What is noticeable about the current crop of youngsters raised south of the Thames is the disproportionate number of skilful, attacking players.

Wan-Bissaka, the outstanding young Crystal Palace right-back, spoke recently of playing with kids on patches of grass on his estate in Walton Green, New Addington, on the fringes of Croydon.

"There'd be balls flying everywhere, a free for all," he told the *Guardian*. "The council would cut the grass every now and then and we'd play proper 15-a-side matches, and I'd be first pick, even though I was probably the youngest.

"I'd never tackle on Walton Green. I was too busy doing the tricks."

Playing street football among the cosmopolitan mix of South London communities has undoubtedly been a factor in the rise of the area's professional players. And although Croydon, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark contain some of the poorest neighbourhoods in the capital – and the worst statistics in the UK for knife crime – other factors are also at play.

Growing professionalism at club academies and improving sporting facilities at state and private schools have also played a part. Hudson-Odoi attended fee-paying Whitgift School in Croydon where the alumni include Victor Moses and former Chelsea striker Bertrand Traore, now at Lyon. The school's teaching staff includes former Crystal Palace manager Steve Kember and Arsenal defender Colin Pates.

Local clubs are also prepared to give youngsters a chance. Zaha and Wan-Bissaka came through at Palace, while Gomez got his chance at Charlton Athletic and Ryan Sessegnon has made a dramatic impact at Fulham.

Elsewhere in London, the wealthier clubs have long looked south of the river to recruit.

Chelsea's extensive youth and loan

Education...Whitgift School in Croydon

Photo: Alamy

Wanted...Callum Hudson-Odoi

system may not have produced many first-team players but a growing number have the confidence to seek playing time abroad, outside the comfort zone of London clubs' academies.

In addition to the examples of Sancho and Nelson, there are other youngsters who have turned their back on English professional clubs to move to mainland Europe.

Lewisham-born Joshua Maja recently moved to Bordeaux from Sunderland, while former Crystal Palace trainee Mandela Egbo left for Borussia Monchengladbach and Greenwich-born Marcus McGuane left Arsenal and now plays for Barcelona B.

Streetwise and confident in their own abilities, the future is bright for South London's young footballers. WS

The Rhur

GERMANY

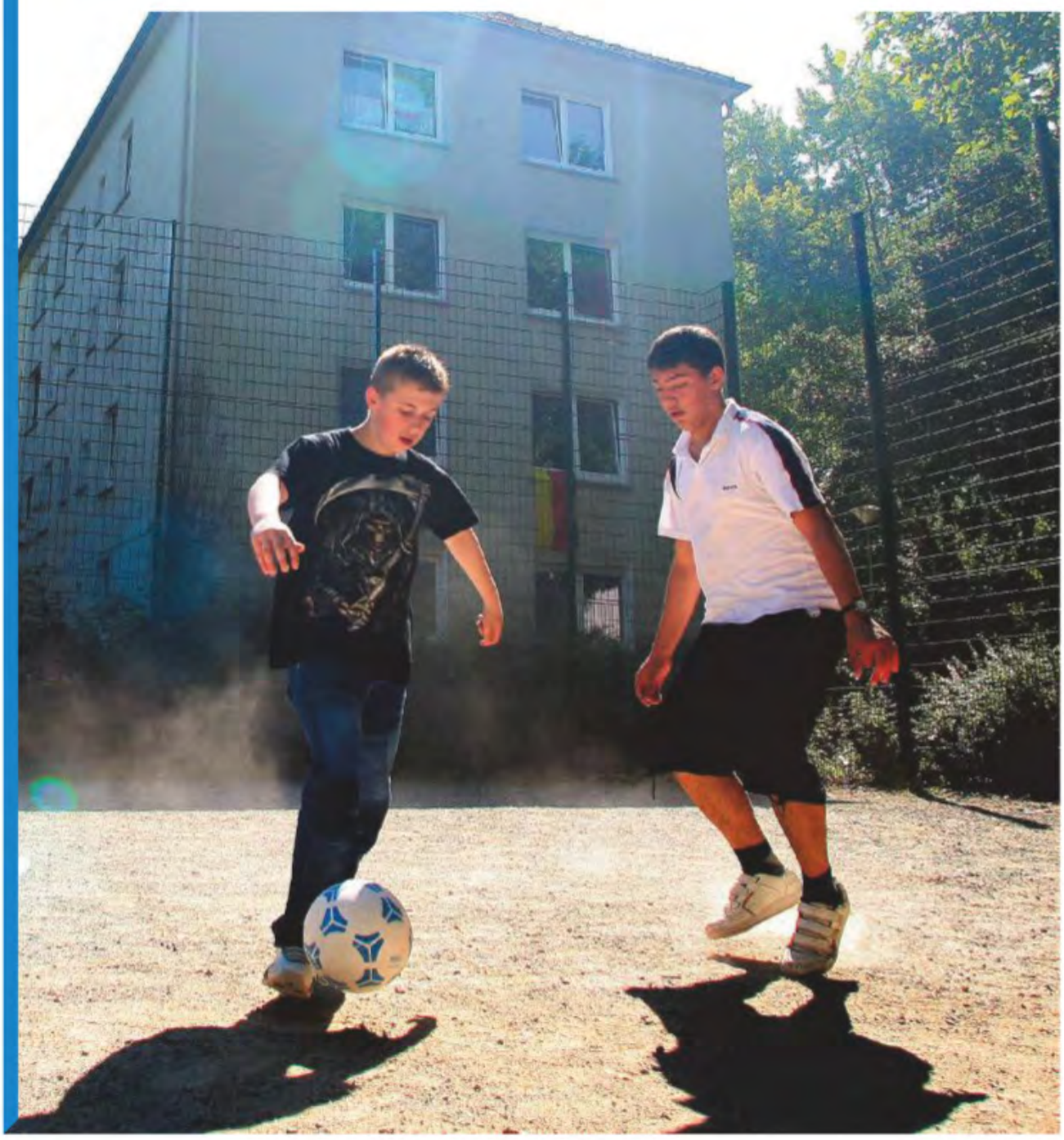
If, in an explosion of self-determination, the Ruhr region of western Germany – once the hub of the country's coal and steel industries – suddenly declared independence and opted to create its own representative XI, chances are it would fare very well indeed.

Both in Germany and beyond, the football stratosphere is overflowing with stars who hail from the area known to locals as "*Das Revier*". The list, as long as one's arm, features every type of elite performer: World Cup winners, Champions League gold medallists, domestic league standouts and, just for good measure, a sprinkling of German national team captains.

Selecting a Ruhr first-choice side is not the most complicated of tasks. Bayern Munich and Germany skipper Manuel Neuer in goal; a back-three consisting of Liverpool's Joel Matip, Kevin Vogt of Hoffenheim and Kaan Ayhan of Fortuna Dusseldorf; a high-roller midfield quartet of Ilkay Gundogan (Manchester City), Leon Goretzka (Bayern), Marco Reus (Dortmund) and Mesut Ozil (Arsenal); Dortmund's Mario Gotze – who although born in Bavaria spent most of his formative years in the Ruhr – as the false nine and a pair of nimble wingers in Manchester City's Leroy Sane and Julian Draxler of Paris Saint-Germain.

Substitutes would include Hanover right-back Julian Korb, Mainz engine-room enforcer Danny Latza, Crystal

Start... Schalke's Mesut Ozil (right) in 2006



Playground...kids in Gelsenkirchen's Bismarck district

Palace schemer Max Meyer, Werder Bremen playmaker Nuri Sahin and Hamburg striker Pierre-Michel Lasogga. The man at the coaching controls? Why not go for Borussia Monchengladbach's Dieter Hecking.

While the southern German states of Bavaria and Baden-Wurttemberg churn out their share of top professionals, when it comes to sheer fervour for the game, the *Ruhrpott* leaves every other *Deutschland* territory in the shade.

Football here is much more than 22 players kicking a ball around. It's an absolute way of life, with tribal loyalties paramount and fans regarding their clubs as their second family. Even the word "obsession" does not quite fit the bill. Mother's milk is infused with incurable football fever.

"A Ruhr without football is simply unthinkable," says ex-Dortmund and Schalke midfielder Ingo Anderbrugge.

"In this region, the game is a religion," aptly comments Dortmund coach extraordinaire Ottmar Hitzfeld, the man who led the *Schwarz-Gelben* to their one and only Champions League title in 1997.

> When it comes to fervour for the game, the *Ruhrpott* leaves every other territory in the shade

Not for nothing is the Ruhr – the largest urban area in Germany with a population of around five million – known as "The Land of a Thousand Derbies". The place is awash with proud, long-established clubs and at one time or another, seven *Revier* outfits – Dortmund, Schalke, Bochum, Duisburg, Wattenscheid, Rot-Weiss Essen and Rot-Weiss Oberhausen – have taken part in the Bundesliga.

These days, only Dortmund and Schalke, two of the best-supported sides in Europe, remain in the top flight. But that's not to say the scene has lost its vibrancy. Second division Bochum and Duisburg still have substantial fan bases, while in the fourth tier of the German pyramid (the Regionalliga) Rot-Weiss Essen enjoy the biggest gates in that league by a country mile, attracting as many as 11,000 through the turnstiles.

Whereas in other parts of the country, a lack of class on the ball is a cardinal sin, *Ruhrpott* supporters generally have other priorities, usually satisfied as long as their favourites on the pitch play with energy, commitment and drive. That's why Jurgen Klopp was such a good fit in his coaching heyday at Dortmund. The signature Ruhr style demands intensity and mental toughness. Young players have to truly compete or sink. This grounding is what makes them so marketable when they come of age.

Locals lads... Marco Reus (right) and Mario Gotze

The school of hard knocks is what it's all about.

What a pity that so few Ruhr natives are currently plying their trade for the region's two flagship clubs. Only two members of the current Dortmund squad (Reus and Gotze) come from the locale, while Schalke do not have any at all. In contrast, second division Cologne – not a million miles away – boast eight men born in the Rhineland city.

Of Germany's 16 federal states, North Rhine-Westphalia – of which the Ruhr is a part – is the best in the business at spawning Bundesliga professionals, with some 60 players currently earning a living in the top-flight. WS

Technique...Dominik Prokop of Austria Vienna

Vienna
AUSTRIA

Whether on the international stage or at club level, Austrian football has been in the doldrums for decades. But that does not mean the game in its capital city has lost its primal force.

Football still inspires and fascinates in this cultural melting pot, with players from immigrant backgrounds a strong currency right now.

West Ham United striker Marko Arnautovic, the son of a Serbian father and Austrian mother, was born and raised here; so were Bayern Munich left-back David Alaba – who is of mixed Nigerian and Filipino heritage – and the Bayer Leverkusen and Austria centre-back Aleksandar Dragovic, another product of the local Serb diaspora. Incidentally, all three of them came through the academy of top local club Austria Vienna, a set-up which owner Frank Stronach has invested heavily in.

> "In this cultural melting pot, players from immigrant backgrounds are a strong currency right now"

These are bright times for the next generation of Viennese talents. At Rapid – the other half of the metropolitan big two – 21-year-old defensive midfielder Dejan Ljubicic is quite a prospect, while keeper Daniel Bachmann, currently on loan at Kilmarnock in Scotland from Premier League Watford, could be a senior national teamer one day soon.

Central defender Maximilian Wober, who recently moved from Ajax to Sevilla, is coming along very nicely, making his international debut in October, and although rather inconsistent, Austria Vienna attacking midfielder Dominik Prokop certainly has the technique and vision to go places.

Every time Austria's national team has been successful, Viennese stars have played instrumental parts. In the 1930s, the revered *Wunderteam* was defined by brilliant

Prospect...Rapid Vienna's Dejan Ljubicic (right)

centre-forward Matthias Sindelar. Centre-half Ernst Ocwirk and wing-half Gerhard Hanappi were the backbone of the side which came a creditable third at the 1954 World Cup. The impressive OFB team of the late 1970s – which famously beat West Germany in the 1978 World Cup finals – was highly dependant on the capital-city class of right-back Robert Sara, schemer Herbert Prohaska and striker Hans Krankl.

The Favoriten district of Vienna is known as the area's talent crucible.

Wunderteam icons Sindelar and goalkeeper Walter Zeman came from here, as did 1980s and 90s national team marksman Toni Polster. Dejan Ljubicic began at the club too. WS

Porto
PORTUGAL

A club renowned for its extensive global scouting network and ability to turn diamonds in the rough into a sell-on bonanza, Porto do not solely concentrate on prospecting in far-flung corners of the planet. They equally like to pan for gold in their own backyard and the seams of talent never are far from the surface.

In recent times, the Dragons have unearthed and developed a clutch of local gems from both the Porto metropolitan area and the northern administrative region, of which it is a sub-set.

Ruben Neves came through the FCP youth ranks prior to moving to English club Wolverhampton Wanderers at the start of last season; free-scoring Sevilla striker Andre Silva enjoyed a similar blue-and-white striped apprenticeship, as did Portuguese international midfielder Sergio Oliveira, who is now on loan at PAOK in Greece.

Porto have been especially fortunate in the many fine centre-backs they have discovered on their porch: Ricardo Carvalho – who later went on to feature for Chelsea, Real Madrid and Monaco as well as win 89 full caps – the much-travelled veteran Bruno Alves who is now with Parma in Serie A, present-day Portugal international Luis Neto of Zenit and the up-and-coming youngster Diogo Leite.

While there are undoubtedly rich pickings to be had in this zone, Porto scouts are only human and have been known to miss what is under their nose.

New...Porto's youngsters

Current Sporting and Portugal attacking midfielder Bruno Fernandes slipped the net, as did long-time national team left-back Fabio Coentrao, who instead chose to start his career at fellow northern outfit Rio Ave.

Andre Gomes, starring at the moment for Premier League Everton, was let go by the Dragons as a 15-year-old. Porto native Joao Mario – who these days features for Internazionale and Portugal – also started out at the Dragon academy, though only stayed for a couple of years and was forced to up sticks when his family moved to Lisbon.

> Six of the Porto side which won their first European title in 1987 were locally sourced

Another to fall through the cracks was Benfica's Pizzi, one of the Eagles' most important individuals this term.

Some of Porto's greatest players of all-time were picked up close to HQ, among them keeper Vitor Baia, stopper Jorge Costa, right-back Joao Pinto, midfielders Jaime Pacheco, Antonio Sousa and Jaime Magalhaes and goal machine striker Fernando Gomes.

Incredibly, six of the Porto side which won their first European title – then known as the Champions' Cup – in 1987 were locally sourced. WS

Champions...Porto were the best in Europe in 1987

Zagreb
CROATIA

With respect to other Croat conurbations such as Split, Rijeka, Osijek and Zadar, there is no getting around the fact that the country's football heartbeat, pulse and other vital signs are all located in the capital Zagreb.

The city's top club, Dinamo, stand head and shoulders above the rest.

Domestic league winners in 12 of the last 13 seasons, regular Champions League participants and boasting the most prolific academy in the land, which is an institution focused on its two-track mission: providing resources for its peerless player-export business and to cultivate a style based on technique, imagination and intensity of purpose.

Coaching youngsters here is a serious business. Mastery of the ball is paramount, self-expression is encouraged and there is a great deal of emphasis on individual session. The kids at the Kitrec-Hacian centre are taught well.

And the balance sheet tells its own story. Over half the Croatia squad which finished second at last year's World Cup finals came through the Dinamo farm system, and in surveys carried out by the CIES Observatory the club regularly ranks among the leading providers of manpower for Europe's top five leagues. No fewer than 66 academy graduates were playing in England, Spain, Italy, Germany and France as of October last year. An additional badge of honour is the high scores they register in the homegrown professional charts.

> Over half the Croatia squad which finished second at the World Cup came through the Dinamo farm system

Born and bred Zagrebians were much to the fore at Russia 2018, with the list including defenders Josip Pivaric and Tin Jedvaj, midfielders Marcelo Brozovic and Milan Badelj, and attackers Andrej Kramaric and Marko Pjaca. Many others, such as skipper Luka Modric, Dejan Lovren, Vedran Corluka and Mateo Kovacic, were early-years pupils at the Dinamo academy.

Dinamo alumni literally form the hardcore of Croatia's Hall of Fame, notably midfield icons Robert Prosinecki and Zvonimir Boban, defenders Zvonimir Soldo and Dario Simic and playmaker Niko Kranjcar. Now that's what you call a classy line-up. WS

Next generation... Dinamo's bench at the 2018 Blue Stars FIFA Youth Cup Final

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WHERE STARS ARE BORN

TOMORROW'S STARS TODAY

Talentscout

EXPAT YOUTH

WORDS: Nick Bidwell

Weston McKENNIE

Age 20 (28.08.98), midfielder, Schalke (Ger) & USA

In a sentence
A Texan titan of a central midfielder who is useful on the ball, can chip in with a goal or two and has copious amounts of running power.

What they say
Schalke coach Domenico Tedesco: "He has a great mentality, he's level-headed and is the sort who doesn't give up. When things aren't going so well he embodies the direction we need to take."

Club-mate Daniel Caligiuri: "The kid is a fighter. He's not one to admit defeat. He does everything to 100 per cent. Few at the age of 20 show this sort of talent."

Story so far
A very single-minded young man, he turned down a MLS Homegrown Player contract with Dallas and a scholarship at the University of Virginia, opting instead to join Schalke in 2016.

He excelled straight away in the junior sides and by the end of his first season he was in the first team, making his Bundesliga debut in May 2017 against Ingolstadt. He started 13 top-flight games last term and would have managed even more playing time if he had not been sidelined with a knee-ligament injury.

Currently enjoying a great breakthrough campaign, he was particularly impressive when heading the winner in a Champions League group game away to Lokomotiv Moscow.

Capped at various youth levels, he marked his USA senior debut with a goal in a 1-1 draw with Portugal in November.

The next step
The word is that Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp is a big fan and would love to take him to Anfield in the summer, but it's very unlikely that Schalke will give ground, at least not yet.

Under contract with the club until 2022, he is seen as one of the building blocks for a better tomorrow in Gelsenkirchen and any immediate sale would not sit well with the fans who love his all-action style.

3 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT McKENNIE

- This is not his first stint living in Germany – he spent three years as a child in the Kaiserslautern area, where his father was serving in the US military.
- Growing up, his favourite player was Roma and Italy number 10 Francesco Totti.
- He is a good friend of Christian Pulisic, who will leave Schalke's regional rivals Borussia Dortmund for Chelsea at the end of the season.

Strengths
His ability to play anywhere in midfield: as a back-line shield, in box-to-box mode or just behind the front men. Has energy, power and commitment to burn, and is a threat both in the air and with his runs from deep positions.

Weaknesses
A certain impetuosity in his defensive interventions and general decision making. Needs to improve his game-management.

> "The kid is a fighter. He's not one to admit defeat. He does everything to 100 per cent"
>
> **Fellow Schalke midfielder Daniel Caligiuri**

Leonardo BALERDI

Age 20 (26.01.99), defender, Borussia Dortmund (Ger) & Argentina
The under-20 international centre-back left Boca Juniors in the transfer window for €15m, making him the fifth-most expensive sale in the Argentinian club's history, behind Walter Samuel, Fernando Gago, Ever Banega and Carlos Tevez.

Pierre KUNDE

Age 23 (26.07.95), midfielder, Mainz (Ger) & Cameroon
The robust central midfielder makes his presence felt with his dynamic and tireless pressing. Is in his first Bundesliga campaign following a move from Atletico Madrid, having previously played for Madrid lower-league outfit Alcobendas, Atletico B, Extremadura and Granada.

Diego LAINEZ

Age 18 (09.06.00), Real Betis (Spa) & Mexico
Diminutive left-footer who is described in his homeland as a Latino answer to Lionel Messi, he can play as a left-winger, second striker or number 10. Signed from Club America for €14m in the transfer window after winning his first full cap against Uruguay.

Rafael LEAO

Age 19 (10.06.99), Lille (Fra) & Portugal
Many thought it was a mistake last summer for Lille presidential advisor Luis Campos to dub the teenager "the Portuguese Mbappe", but he has lived up to the billing and is used to hype. When he was starting out with Sporting in Lisbon, one of his coaches, Tiago Fernandes, claimed that he was even more talented than Cristiano Ronaldo at a similar age, saying: "Rafael is the best player in the history of the Sporting academy."

Robert NAVARRO

Age 16 (12.04.02), midfielder, Monaco (Fra) & Spain
Highly promising under-16 international who recently became the youngest player in Monaco's history. He was lured away from Barcelona by the Ligue 1 side in the summer following a contractual impasse.

Dani OLMO

Age 20 (07.05.98), winger, Dinamo Zagreb (Cro) & Spain
One of many Barcelona academy fledglings to have swapped La Masia for a diet of first-team football elsewhere, he quit the Catalan capital in July 2014 and has carved out a niche for himself in Croatia. Now a member of Spain's under-21 squad, he could be in line for a big-money move this summer. Barca are thought to want him back, their interest being accentuated by the clutch of big clubs homing in on him.

Federico VALVERDE

Age 20 (22.07.98), midfielder, Real Madrid (Spa) & Uruguay
Tactically aware, he is elegant and enterprising and looked the part in a string of substitute appearances this term before making his starting debut in January in a 2-1 win at Real Betis.

Rafik ZEKHNINI

Age 21 (12.01.98), winger, Twente (Hol) & Norway
The Norwegian-born son of Moroccan parents has been a big success with the Dutch second-tier high flyers. His future at Twente, however, is uncertain as he is only on loan and parent club Fiorentina may be open to a permanent departure for the Norway under-21 international.

6 of the best

Stars of the second tier

Nick Bidwell selects some of the standout performers in Europe's second divisions

1 Marco STIEPERMANN

NORWICH CITY

Tall and physically imposing, the ex-Borussia Dortmund academy graduate does not have the typical build of an attacking midfielder. However, looks can be deceptive and the 27-year-old is an elegant and imaginative playmaker with a flair for setting the tempo. He also packs a fine shot from distance.

A fringe player in the Dortmund squad that won the Bundesliga title in 2011, he was a one-time regular in the German youth ranks – capped from under-15 level up to under-20 – and has made a fine recovery after a couple of under-par seasons.

In the 2016-17 campaign at German second-tier side Bochum he produced little of note and last term, his first in England, he was hampered by a groin complaint and a spell playing out of position at left-back.

2 Joao FILIPE

BENFICA B

Reported to be on the verge of an upgrade to Benfica's senior squad, the 19-year-old winger or second striker has been scoring and making goals galore for the Eagles' second-string and turning on the style in the UEFA Youth League, especially impressive when notching a brace in a 3-0 thumping of Bayern Munich.

Also known as "Jota", he has won two European junior titles with Portugal: the under-17 crown in 2016 and at under-19 level last year, when he was the joint-top scorer with five goals.

With Benfica since the age of eight, he had a trial with Manchester United in 2014. With three-and-a-half years still to run on his current contract, one commodity he does not lack is self-confidence, stating: "I am a virtuoso. I love to be happy on the pitch and to do my thing. I'm a different sort of player because I have street football in my boots."

3 Gaetan CHARBONNIER
BREST

A striker with a ravenous appetite for scoring, his 16 goals in his first 22 starts this season represented almost half of Brest's haul as they pushed for promotion.

In the best form of his life this term, the 30-year-old revelation was signed in the summer of 2017 from Reims after a career that saw him becoming something of an archetypal nearly man: moments of heady optimism segueing into rude awakenings.

And he has certainly had a long string of setbacks to contend with, failing to make it from Paris Saint-Germain reserves to the first team, then a dismal spell at Montpellier, followed by the agony of tearing cruciate ligaments in February 2017.

Mobile and unusually unselfish for a centre-forward, he insists: "I get as much satisfaction from creating a goal as scoring one."

4 Ilija NESTOROVSKI
PALERMO

Any hopes the Sicilian club have of ending their two-year Serie A exile will largely depend on the physical condition of their Macedonian striker and skipper, who for the last couple of months has been laid low by a calf injury.

In his absence, Palermo have not been nearly as effective, missing the skills of the 28-year-old dead-ball specialist who is able to produce long-range shots with amazing amounts of dip and curl.

After playing in Macedonia and the Czech Republic, he built his move to Italy in 2016 on the back of a stupendous sequence of finishing for Croat side Inter Zapresic, for whom he managed to score 71 goals in three seasons.

5 Ruben CASTRO
LAS PALMAS

While attempts to immediately right the wrongs of their relegation from the top flight last season might not be going to plan for Las Palmas at the moment, at least their veteran centre-forward has been living up to expectations, regularly among the goals and prominent in the Segunda Division scoring charts.

Back for a second spell at his hometown club, the diminutive 37-year-old remains as fit and sharp as ever and now ranks third in the all-time list of second-tier scorers.

A natural *goleador*, he was at his prime during a magnificent eight-year sojourn at Real Betis, where he racked up 148 goals in all competitions to become the most prolific scorer in the club's history.

After two decades on the pro circuit, he is fast approaching 250 career goals. Capped at under-21 level way back when, he was recently cleared after a long-running domestic violence case.

6 David BATES
HAMBURG

No one should be particularly surprised that the 22-year-old Scottish centre-back has become a cult hero at the Volksparkstadion since arriving on a free from Rangers in the summer as German fans still have a soft spot for no-nonsense stoppers – and he most definitely comes into that category.

After falling into the second division for the first time in their history, HSV have had to roll up their sleeves and meet fire with fire – which is meat and drink for such a combative individual.

Having won his first cap for Scotland last autumn, he has not only made light work of the *Deutschland* culture shock but also improved his game, appearing much more comfortable on the ball.

Glenn Moore

Stajcic axed by Australia

Shock decision ahead of June's World Cup

When Jill Ellis surveys the coaching landscape ahead of this summer's Women's World Cup she will feel like a battle-scarred veteran as the USA coach is by some distance the most established dug-out presence after an extraordinary cull by the game's leading nations.

Australia's shock axing of Alen Stajcic in January meant seven of FIFA's top-10 ranked countries in the women's game have changed coaches in the 18 months since Euro 2017. Of these, five were fired – including those in charge of four of the world's top six.

Three parted company because of poor results, but Stajcic – like England's Mark Sampson – went due to off-field issues. As with Sampson, events appear to have been set in motion by a confidential survey of players. This, said Football Federation Australia (FFA) chief executive David Gallop, had highlighted "workplace issues of the culture and the set-up". He added: "We no longer have confidence that Alen is the right person to lead the team and staff."

And while Gallop insisted the situation was not analogous to events in 2018, when New Zealand coach Andreas Heraf was sacked amid accusations of bullying players, the intimation of a toxic culture raised a cloud of suspicion, especially as one survey had been conducted by Our Watch, an organisation that campaigns against violence against women. The other survey was conducted by the Professional Footballers Association.

Having read both and discussed the contents with Stajcic, the FFA fired him.

FFA chairman Chris Nikou told ABC Radio: "My hands are tied to a certain extent about what I can and can't say about what's occurred. This was not a decision taken lightly. It was after due consideration in consultation with the management team based in part on surveys but based in part on other information before the board."

The fallout was considerable. Two coaching staff quit, FFA's major sponsor was reported to be "disappointed" and there were calls for Gallop to go. The majority of the players – including leading figures such as Sam Kerr, Lisa De Vanna and Caitlin Foord – expressed their support for Stajcic on social media.

With the FFA saying very little, citing confidentiality issues but perhaps also wary of future legal action, rumours abounded. A *Sydney Morning Herald* investigation claimed the atmosphere was "poisoned" by "one key player" being indulged. Two staff members were said to "fat shame" younger players – a potent issue given the connection between body perception and mental health problems among young women – and there were allegations both of homophobic comments by staff and a "lesbian mafia" seeking to force Stajcic out.

Stajcic took over in 2014 after his predecessor, Hesterine De Reus, had been forced out by a player revolt. He took the team to the quarter-finals of the 2015 World Cup and 2016 Olympics, and to a record-high fourth in the FIFA rankings, though performances had dipped in 2018.

During his reign the Matildas became fully professional and it is accepted high demands were made of players. Results were good, but some players responded better than others to the intensity required both mentally and physically.

FFA expressed a desire to have Stajcic's replacement installed ahead of hosting the inaugural Cup of Nations in late February but, given the circumstances, it could be an interim role, possibly even a part-time one, with a full-time appointment made after the World Cup. Jeff Hopkins of Melbourne Victory and Brisbane Roar's Melissa Andreatta were the main W-League contenders, along with Joe Montemurro, now at Arsenal, and much-decorated former German coach Silvia Neid.

Stajcic's dismissal came not long after Sampson and the FA reached a settlement on his claim for unfair dismissal. Sampson, who led England to semi-finals in the 2015 World Cup and 2017 European Championships, had been accused of racist comments by striker Eniola Aluko, initially in a confidential survey. An inquiry first cleared Sampson, then found he did make the remarks but was not personally racist and should undergo diversity training rather than be dismissed.

However, by then Sampson had been dismissed. Two years prior the FA had investigated claims of "inappropriate behaviour" while Sampson was Bristol Academy manager and decided to retain him. Now they reconsidered and fired him. Sampson sued for unfair dismissal and the FA settled in January, shortly before the case was due in court. Phil Neville is now the England manager.

Two of other top-six coaches went because of results. Germany dispensed

Success...Australia celebrate a goal against Chile in November

> Seven of FIFA's top-10 ranked countries in the women's game have changed coaches in the last 18 months

Gone...Australia coach Alen Stajcic

with Steffi Jones after 19 months when a disappointing defence of their European crown was followed by a poor start to World Cup qualifying, and Martina Voss-Tecklenburg has replaced her. France sacked Olivier Echouafni after less than a year, with Corinne Diacre taking over.

Canada's John Herdman, meanwhile, switched to coach the men's team and was replaced by Kenneth Heiner-Moller, leaving Ellis as the only top-six coach to survive since summer 2017.

Ellis, who was appointed in April 2014 after a month as interim coach, began 2019 with a rare loss, to France, but is insulated after leading her team to victory at the 2015 World Cup. That enabled her to survive Rio 2016, when the US went out in the quarter-finals – the first time they had failed to reach the Final since the sport debuted at the Games in 1996.

With Sweden's Pia Sundhage stepping down, and Brazil's Emily Lima fired, only Ellis, Asako Takakura (Japan) and Sarina Wiegman (Holland) of the FIFA top 10 have been in office for at least two years.

However, that does not mean their opponents should be written off. After all, Wiegman steered the Dutch to success at Euro 2017 despite taking over just six months earlier and Ellis had only been in the job a year when she won the 2015 World Cup. It seems sometimes a fresh approach is the best one. WS

Settled...Mark Sampson

Round -up

Friendly...Cameroon (in green) take on France in October

CAMEROON'S NEW COACH

Alain Djeumfa has been appointed Cameroon coach, replacing Joseph Ndoko who steered the Indomitable Lionesses to the World Cup finals by taking third place in the African Women's Cup of Nations.

Djeumfa was Ndoko's fitness coach but has extensive management experience in domestic football.

A SECOND DRAFTEE SAYS NO

Julia Ashley, the NWSL number six draft pick, followed number two choice Hailie Mace in moving abroad rather than accept her selection by Sky Blue.

Choice...Julia Ashley

Although a New Jersey native who grew up 40 miles from the franchise, Ashley went to Linkopings, in Sweden, while Mace has joined Melbourne City.

Ashley indicated the much-criticised state of Sky Blue's facilities was the main factor in her decision.

NWSL rivals Seattle Reign announced a move to Tacoma, south of the west-coast city, and a rebranding as Reign FC. The club had been at Memorial Park since 2014 but the 71-year-old venue was regarded as inadequate and no other location was appropriate within Seattle.

RECORDS FALL IN IBERIA

Atletico Madrid beat Athletic Bilbao at San Mames in the quarter-finals of the Spanish Cup, watched by 48,121 – the highest domestic attendance at a women's club match in Europe since the 1920s and larger than any attendance Bilbao men's team have recorded at the ground this season.

There was a record of a different sort in Portugal, with Benfica beating CP Pego 32-0 in the second division.

SPANIARD AT BIRMINGHAM

Marta Tejedor, the former coach of Chile, Peru and Atletico Madrid, was the surprise replacement for Marc Skinner at Birmingham City.

The 50-year-old made the perfect start, with the Blues winning her first match at WSL champions Chelsea.

WORLD CUP CLUES

A series of tournaments in late-February/early March will show how the World Cup finalists are shaping up.

The She Believes Cup pits hosts USA against England, Japan and Brazil; Canada, Holland, Spain, Scotland, Sweden, China and Norway feature in the Algarve Cup; Australia's Cup of Nations also features New Zealand, South Korea and Argentina; while Italy, Nigeria, South Africa, Thailand are at the Cyprus Cup.

Elsewhere, Germany and France contest a brace of friendlies with each other, as do Jamaica and Chile.

Only Cameroon of the 24 finalists are not scheduled to be in action.

VICTORY CELEBRATIONS

Melbourne Victory won the Premier crown in Australia's W-League with a game to spare. Managed by ex-Wales defender Jeff Hopkins, and with England striker Natasha Dowie up front, it is Victory's first regular-season title.

Brisbane Roar, Perth Glory and Sydney made up the play-off quartet, while Melbourne City – winners of the last three championships – failed to make the final four.

Victorious...the W-League champions

World Soccer vintage 37 years ago

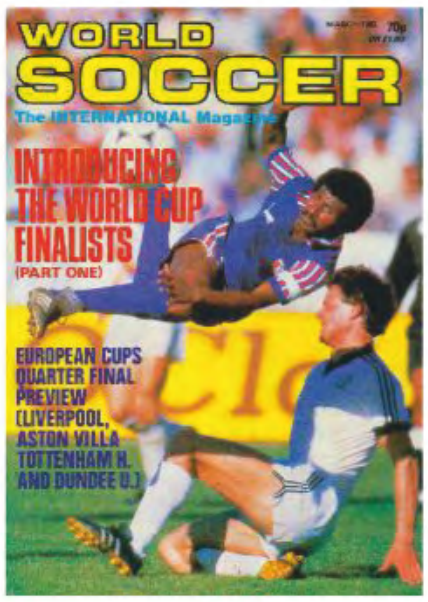
March 1982

Algeria consider changing their coach before the World Cup

With action from a qualifier between Kuwait and New Zealand on the cover, *World Soccer* began its countdown to the forthcoming World Cup.

The issue profiled finalists Algeria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, El Salvador, Peru, Russia and Yugoslavia, and also took a look at some of the coaches who would be heading to Spain that summer.

Although in charge of Algeria at the time, Yevgeni Rogov was far from certain of being one of those leading a team at the finals – as John Goodbody suggested in his review of the North African side.



Goodbody said of Rogov: "A man with shining eyes and a lively character he considers the principal weakness of Algerian players [to be] a lack of dedication." And he quoted the Russian coach as saying of his team: "They are gifted technically but they do not like any hard training. My colleagues and I have had to teach the players its importance."

Accepting that Soviet discipline and physical excellence were now taking precedence over skill and initiative, the Algerian newspaper *El Moudjahid* had commented: "There was a time when we had skill for skill's sake and we were, each time, eliminated from every official competition. Today, the reverse is occurring and there is no place for attractive delicacies."

But while Goodbody acknowledged "the realism of international football had reached even Algeria", he also revealed "rumours are growing ever more strong that Rogov will not lead the team in Spain", suggesting "Rachid Mekloufi, the one-time Saint-Etienne forward, will return for a second spell as manager".

Goodbody was correct, with Mekloufi and Mahieddine Khalef being appointed co-coaches before the finals.

In Spain that summer it was Algeria who provided the biggest shock of the tournament, beating West Germany 2-1 in their opening group game, with the winner being scored by 1981 African Player of the Year, Lakhdar Belloumi.

Goodbody had said of the midfielder: "A master of the unexpected pass, he is an inspired goalscorer as well."

Unfortunately for Belloumi and his team-mates, despite beating the Germans and winning 3-2 against Chile, and although they finished joint-top of their group, Algeria failed to qualify for the knockout stage on goal difference due to a 2-0 loss to Austria. WS

Shock...Algeria celebrate beating West Germany

"They are gifted technically but they do not like any hard training. My colleagues and I have had to teach the players its importance"

Russian coach Yevgeni Rogov on Algeria

Hero...Lakhdar Belloumi

Also in this issue...

p3 The news section of the issue reports how Bayern Munich general manger Uli Hoeness was seriously injured in a plane crash. The light aircraft in which he was flying came down eight miles from Hanover, killing the three other occupants.

MORE THAN LOCAL PRIDE AT STAKE

Norwby gets tough with Amundsen

HOPE FOR COLOMBIA

p40 When the North American Soccer League "calmly announced that the league had been restructured", Paul Gardner felt "yes, you can just about believe that...if you believe that the Americans restructured Hiroshima and Nagasaki". Gardner went on to explain that "in 1980 the league had consisted of 24 clubs...at the time of writing NASL is down to 14".

p30-31 Writing in his regular column, Brian Glanville offers his support to Stanley Rous, agreeing with him that "there should be only eight teams in the finals of the World Cup; not 16, let alone the present 24".

WORLD CUP SYSTEM IS A MADMAN'S FLYTRAP

THE BRIAN GLANVILLE COLUMN

p36 Keir Radnedge told of worrying events concerning Serie A side Avellino during a training session. He revealed: "While most of the first team were out on the pitch, a bunch of masked gunmen burst into the dressing rooms, herded coaches and reserves into the shower rooms and stole the £10,000 bonus money due to the players for their 1-0 win over Como the previous Sunday."

p34 Colo Colo were champions in Chile – thanks to two points received for winning a pre-season tournament. Eric Weil pointed out "Cobreloa...won a match more to finish with a 20-6-4 record against the champions' 19-8-3" and "both teams totalled 46 points in actual league play".

COLO COLO WIN CHILEAN TITLE

10 years ago

Twenty-two fans are killed and more than 100 injured in a stampede when a wall collapses prior to Ivory Coast's African Nations Cup qualifier at home to Malawi.

20 years ago

The holders Real Madrid are knocked out of the Champions League, beaten 3-1 on aggregate by Dynamo Kiev in the quarter-finals after losing 2-0 in Kiev following a 1-1 draw in Spain.

30 years ago

Coached by Carlos Queiroz, Portugal win the World Youth Championship for the first time, beating Nigeria 2-0 at Saudi Arabia's King Fahd International Stadium in the Final.

40 years ago

A World Cup winner with Argentina the previous summer, Osvaldo Ardiles scores his first goal for Tottenham Hotspur since his move to England as they beat Derby County 2-0.

50 years ago

Swindon Town of the Third Division beat Arsenal 3-1 in extra-time in the League Cup Final but are denied a place in the following season's Fairs Cup as they are not a top-flight team.

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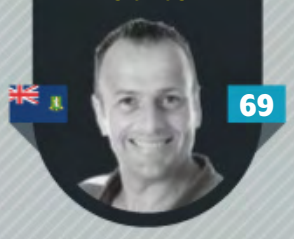
64

PAUL GARDNER
USA

70

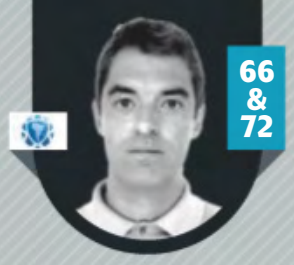
MIKE PLASTOW
Japan

STEVE MENARY
British Virgin Islands



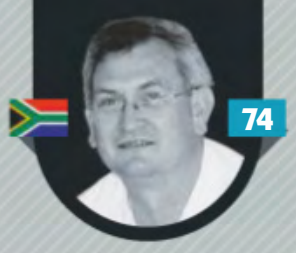
69

TIM VICKERY
South America



66 & 72

MARK GLEESON
Africa



74

PLUS

64

Pre-season friendly...Toronto's Terrence Boyd (left) and Diego Polenta of LA Galaxy

DIARY

68 Comprehensive global news

RESULTS, TABLES, FIXTURES

76 ESM XI
77 Internationals
79 Club matches

SQUADS

80 Holland: Eredivisie

72

Under-20s... Ecuador's Gustavo Vallecilla (no6) in action against Brazil

USA

PAUL GARDNER

Atlanta still the team to beat

Champions sell Almiron but sign Martinez

Despite the loss of coach Tata Martino, who is now in charge of Mexico's national side, and Paraguayan playmaker Miguel Almiron to Newcastle United, defending champions **Atlanta United** are the front runners to win the 2019 MLS Cup.

While the departure of Almiron will obviously hurt, the blow is softened by the $27million Atlanta received from the Premier League side and the arrival of Gonzalo "Pity" Martinez, from Libertadores Cup winners River Plate, who was South America's player of the year in 2018.

The man brought in to replace Martino and to lead a largely Latino team is Dutch coach Frank De Boer, which is an interesting appointment considering European bosses have never really flourished in MLS.

Atlanta's biggest challengers this term could be **Los Angeles FC**. Coached by former USA boss Bob Bradley, they finished third in the Western Conference last year, which was a remarkable achievement for an expansion team.

A lively, attractive side, they can also count plenty of goals, with Mexican striker Carlos Vela and his Uruguayan partner Diego Rossi returning this year.

New York Red Bulls could mount a challenge. A solid, if unspectacular side, they have a reputation of being a team who regularly make the play-offs but fail to advance to the Final. This year they will have to make do without 20-year-old midfielder Tyler Adams who has joined Bundesliga club RB Leipzig.

Portland Timbers, last year's losing finalists, must also be added to the list of possible challengers.

Under Giovanni Savarese, who is the brightest of the younger MLS coaches, Timbers are basically a Latin team, and with 10 of last year's starters returning they have been looking for just one reinforcement: a striker. Their chief target is reportedly 21-year-old Ezequiel Ponce, an Argentinian who is currently on loan at AEK in Greece from Roma.

DC United fans will have been pleased that negotiations with Paris Saint-Germain over the sale of Argentinian playmaker Luciano Acosta broke down. He will now stay and resume the very productive partnership with Wayne Rooney that propelled the club into the play-offs last time out.

LA Galaxy, miffed at being upstaged by newcomers Los Angeles FC, have a new coach in Guillermo Barros Schelotto, who took Boca Juniors to last year's Libertadores Cup Final. Despite some spectacular goals from the flamboyant

Coaches...the men in charge of MLS 2019

Preview

Zlatan Ibrahimovic, last term was a huge disappointment with Galaxy missing out on the play-offs, just as they had done in 2017.

New players this season include Uruguayan defender Diego Polenta and 21-year-old Mexican midfielder Uriel Antuna, who is on loan from Manchester City, while the Dos Santos brothers have both re-signed.

Two big names leaving MLS are Sebastian Giovinco and David Villa.

After winning the MLS championship in 2017, Giovinco and **Toronto** slumped badly last time out and did not even make the play-offs and the Italian, who was a huge fan favourite has joined Saudi Arabian club Al Hilal.

Villa was an ever-present with **New York City** since his arrival in 2015 but he has now gone to Japan and signed for Vissel Kobe. His replacement is Romanian striker Alexandru Mitrita from Universitatea Craiova, whose transfer fee of $8.5m was the most the club has ever paid and the third-highest in MLS history.

Philadelphia Union are not known as big spenders among MLS clubs but they do appear to have come up with the biggest bargain of the close season. Mexico midfielder Marco Fabian will be joining them on a free transfer from Eintracht Frankfurt and his exceptional technical ball skills are described by sporting director Ernst Tanner as the team's "missing piece".

San Jose Earthquakes have a lot of catching up to do after a dismal 2018 campaign. After appointing Swedish coach Mikael Stahre last year they then announced a deal with Second Spectrum under which the club would be using the most advanced analytics, metrics and soccer-tracking methods.

Despite co-operating with the German national team, who also use the same set-up, the experiment was a disaster for the Quakes, who finished the season with just four wins and the worst record in MLS. They have a new coach in 45-year-old Argentinian Matias Almeyda and there has been no talk of analytics for 2019.

Seattle Sounders, another team that have promised much but delivered little, will surely be home to the year's best comeback story. A year ago, Jordan Morris was hailed as the most promising of the young Americans. He had played 52 games for Sounders, scoring 15 goals, and got five in 25 games for the US national side. But a pre-season knee injury proved so troublesome that he was sidelined for the entire campaign. Thankfully, the 24-year-old is once again fit and ready to go.

Newcomers **Cincinnati** have acquired several MLS veterans through the expansion draft, but by and large they are content to go with the players who were successful in the second-tier United Soccer League.

Meanwhile, David Beckham and his group of investors' Inter Miami side are scheduled to join MLS in 2020.

After being unable to close a deal on any of their first four preferred choices for a stadium site, it appears that land near Miami airport has now been secured and an arena will be up and ready for use beginning with the 2021 season. WS

KEY DATES
Season starts
March 2, 2019
MLS Cup
November 10, 2019

Partnership...Wayne Rooney (left) and Luciano Acosta

Favourites...Atlanta United (in black) and Los Angeles

Libertadores Cup

TIM VICKERY

KEY DATES
Group stage starts
March 5, 2019
Group stage ends
May 9, 2019
Knockout rounds start
July 23, 2019
Final
November 23, 2019

Argentina and Brazil look set to dominate

Clubs from continent's big two will be favourites when the group stage kicks off

Sides from Argentina and Brazil are again expected to dominate South America's top club competition – and teams from the two continental powerhouses have already met in the qualifying rounds.

Libertadores champions three times, Sao Paulo are already out after losing to provincial side Talleres, who were in the Argentinian third division less than five years ago.

But even without Sao Paulo in the group stage, Brazil will still have a powerful contingent in this year's field. And three teams in particular will fancy their chances of going all the way and ending their country's dismal record of just one finalist since 2013.

While the previous administration at **Flamengo** concentrated on getting the finances right, the current one wants titles and has shown itself willing to spend in order to chase them. The squad looks stronger than last year and the choice of veteran Abel Braga as coach is a clear attempt to emulate what domestic champions Palmeiras did in 2018 under Luiz Felipe Scolari.

Palmeiras fell at the semi-final stage in last year's tournament and want to show they are capable of better. The other Brazilians to go out in the semis were 2017 winners **Gremio**, who were hit by injuries as they attempted to retain their title. They have, however, reinforced their squad, especially up front, and have the benefit of continuity. The colourful Renato Portaluppi has been a revelation since taking over some two-and-a-half years ago,

Preview

Beaten...Hernanes (in black) struggles against Talleres, who overcame Sao Paulo 2-0 on aggregate in the qualifiers

consistently producing a team that plays thoughtful and attractive football.

Gremio's reign as champions was ended by a team with even more continuity, with Marcelo Gallardo having been coach of Buenos Aires giants **River Plate** for almost five years – which is an eternity by South American standards.

During that time, Gallardo has built a number of different teams, developed as a tactician and won the Libertadores twice, in 2015 and 2018.

Although they have lost attacking midfielder Gonzalo Martinez from last year's triumphant team to Atlanta United, River have otherwise retained an exciting squad and they look the team to beat once again.

Runners-up to their arch-rivals last time out, **Boca Juniors** are more of an unknown quantity this term. New coach Gustavo Alfaro has a long CV but no

Boca hope...new boy Jorman Campuzano

successful experience with a big club.

At the age of 56 this is the biggest challenge of his career, and the loss of Wilmar Barrios and Pablo Perez means that he will have to rebuild the midfield. But if new Colombian signing Jorman Campuzano is a success, then there is enough attacking talent at Alfaro's disposal for Boca to be a threat.

Of the best of the rest, last year's quarter-finalists **Cruzeiro** should not be discounted under the canny command of Mano Menezes and their local Belo Horizonte rivals **Atletico Mineiro** also have potential, although coach Levir Cupli will have to tighten up the defence.

Buoyed by last year's Sudamericana

Although they have lost attacking midfielder Gonzalo Martinez from last year's triumph, River Plate look the team to beat once again

Cup success, **Athletico Paranaense** are a go-ahead club who are anxious for more silverware, while **Internacional** did better than expected in their first season back in the Brazilian top flight last year and they will be looking to keep the momentum going.

Argentina's **Rosario Central** have an interesting squad and a coach, Edgardo Bauza, who took them to the semi-finals in 2001 and has since won the title twice. His last triumph was with **San Lorenzo**, who have been in poor domestic form but whose current coach, Jorge Almiron, is highly rated and led Lanus to the 2017 Final.

San Lorenzo will be in the same group as Colombian side **Junior**, who are one of the most feared clubs from outside the Brazil-Argentina axis.

For the past two seasons, Junior have gone close in the Sudamericana Cup, falling in the semi-finals and the Final of tournaments that they were good enough to win. Those past exploits mean they have no shortage of experience as well as talent, and the signing of Chilean attacking midfielder Mati Fernandez should give them extra firepower. New coach Luis Fernando Suarez also has an impressive CV, taking Ecuador to the knockout stage of the 2006 World Cup and doing solid work recently with modest La Equidad.

LDU Quito would seem to have by some distance their best squad since becoming the only team from Ecuador to win the competition, back in 2008. Uruguayan coach Pablo Repetto took their tiny neighbours Independiente del Valle all the way to the Final in 2016; with more resources at his disposal LDU could be a threat, not least because of the altitude of their home city.

Down at sea level in Guayaquil, **Emelec** have assembled a squad with some attacking depth and their group does not look like one of the most difficult in the competition. Three times champions **Olimpia** of Paraguay have also done well out of the draw and their great rivals **Cerro Porteno** will also hope to make it beyond the group phase.

The glory days of Uruguay's clubs are long gone, but it will be interesting to see if **Penarol** can maintain the progress they have shown since Diego Lopez took over in the middle of last year.

Chilean clubs also have a poor record of late and reigning domestic champions **Universidad Catolica** were rocked at the end of last year by the sudden resignation of Spanish coach Benat San Jose. Former Bolivia and Ecuador boss Gustavo Quinteros has a hard act to follow, but the incentive is enormous: if Catolica can match their achievement of 1993 and reach the Final they will have a big advantage.

As of this year the Libertadores Final is a one-off game at a pre-determined venue – which in 2019 will be in Catolica's home city of Santiago. WS

Close...Junior's Jefferson Gomez takes on Athletico Paranaense in last year's Sudamericana Cup Final

JANUARY 16-FEBRUARY 13, 2019

Global diary

A comprehensive record of recent events around the world

Wednesday January 16

AUSTRALIA: Central Coast Mariners avoid equalling the A-League record of 11 consecutive defeats by beating Melbourne City 2-1 – their first win in 327 days.
GHANA: Undercover journalist Ahmed Hussein-Suale, whose investigations into corruption in Ghanaian football led to a lifetime ban for the former head of the country's FA, is shot dead in the capital Accra.
SAUDI ARABIA: Juventus win the Italian Super Cup for an eighth time, beating Milan 1-0 in Jeddah with a goal from Cristiano Ronaldo.
SPAIN: Real Madrid lose 1-0 away to Leganes in the Spanish Cup but go through 3-1 on aggregate.

Thursday January 17

KAZAKHSTAN: Bulgarian coach Stanimir Stoilov leaves his position in charge of Kazakhstan's national team by mutual consent.
SPAIN: Remanded in custody since May 2017 on accusations of money laundering relating to television rights and sponsorship of Brazil's national team, the 602 days that former Barcelona president Sandro Rosell has spent awaiting trial is reported to be the longest in Spanish judicial history for an alleged economic crime.

Friday January 18

QATAR: Rui Faria, who left Manchester United in the summer after 17 years of working as Jose Mourinho's assistant, is appointed coach of reigning Qatar Stars League champions Al Duhail.

Saturday January 19

FRANCE: Hat-tricks from Kylian Mbappe and Edinson Cavani help Paris Saint-Germain beat Guingamp 9-0 and record their biggest-ever win at Parc des Princes. Monaco lose 5-1 at home to Strasbourg.
WALES: Losing finalists last season, Cardiff Met win the Welsh League Cup for the first time, beating Cambrian & Clydach Vale 2-0 with goals from Adam Roscrow.

Sunday January 20

HOLLAND: PSV concede in stoppage time to draw 2-2 at Emmen but Ajax miss the chance to go top of the table as an injury-time equaliser sees them held 4-4 at home by Heerenveen.
ITALY: Duvan Zapata becomes the first Atalanta player to score four goals in a Serie A game since 1952 as they win 5-0 away at Frosinone.

Monday January 21

ENGLAND: Huddersfield Town appoint Borussia Dortmund's under-23s coach Jan Siewert as manager. Former England left-back and free agent Ashley Cole joins Derby County on a deal until the end of the season. Fulham striker Aboubakar Kamara is arrested on suspicion of actual bodily harm and criminal damage after a fight at the club's training ground.

Tuesday January 22

ENGLAND: Emiliano Sala, who joined Cardiff City from Nantes on Friday for a reported club-record fee of £15m, is confirmed as one of two people on board a plane that went missing over the Channel Islands on Monday.
SAUDI ARABIA: Juan Antonio Pizzi steps down as coach of Saudi Arabia following their 1-0 loss to Japan in the last 16 of the Asian Cup the previous day.

Wednesday January 23

ENGLAND: David Beckham, who already owns US club Inter Miami, is to buy a 10 per cent stake in non-league Salford City and become a part-owner alongside former Manchester United team-mates Gary and Phil Neville, Ryan Giggs, Paul Scholes and Nicky Butt.
FRANCE: Italy striker Mario Balotelli joins Marseille on a deal until the end of the season after being released from his contract with Nice.
ITALY: Genoa's Krzysztof Piatek joins Milan for €35m and replaces on-loan Juventus striker Gonzalo Higuain, who moves to Chelsea on a similar deal.
SCOTLAND: Jermain Defoe, who is on loan from Bournemouth, gets Rangers' goal in a 2-1 defeat at Kilmarnock – the sixth time he has

Saudi success...Juventus with the Italian Super Cup

Denied...Kik Pierie heads home Heerenveen's equaliser in the 4-4 draw with Ajax

scored on his debut for a new club.
SPAIN: Barcelona confirm the €75m signing of Ajax midfielder Frenkie De Jong, with the deal to go through in the summer.

Thursday January 24

CHINA: Marcello Lippi confirms his two-year tenure as coach of China is over after his side lose 3-0 to Iran in the Asian Cup quarter-finals.
EGYPT: Ismaily are expelled from the CAF Champions League after crowd trouble resulted in last week's home game against Tunisia's Club Africain being abandoned.
ENGLAND: Chelsea beat Tottenham Hotspur on penalties and will meet Manchester City in the League Cup Final on February 24.
FRANCE: After 104 days and 20 games in charge, Monaco sack coach Thierry Henry.
HOLLAND: Feyenoord announce coach Giovanni Van Bronckhorst will step down in the summer.
SPAIN: Real Madrid top the latest ➤

Debut...Jermain Defoe of Rangers

British Virgin Islands

STEVE MENARY

Youthful...the BVI team that drew 0-0 in a friendly with Saint Martin in July

Life after Irma

Caribbean island rebuilds after devastating hurricane

"We have a population of 30,000 but that went down to 20,000 after the hurricane," says British Virgin Islands FA president Andy Bickerton, whose own home was one of the many destroyed by Hurricane Irma in 2017. And while some of those who left in the aftermath have returned, the impact of the disaster still reverberates.

"The hurricane caused lots of players to relocate to a lot of countries," says the nation's most-capped player, Troy Caesar. "It caused a lot of problems in the BVI. We had just started on a new stadium and that was damaged. Even some of the youngsters that I used to coach were gone and people's addresses were lost."

With the pitch at the $5million stadium in Tortola ruined, the national team had to play games in neighbouring Anguilla.

Like many Caribbean islands, the BVI have had to look abroad for players – such as Kristian Javier, who was born in the USA. The 22-year-old midfielder, whose mother is from the BVI, says: "You must constantly remind yourself why you play the game. You have to realise you are carrying the hope of your country with you into each match."

But recruiting swathes of players from abroad is not a long-term strategy.

"We are doing it to keep the scores reasonable until we can bring kids through," says Bickerton, who played for the BVI in his youth and has been president three times since 1991. "Bringing in too many overseas players can be dangerous as we are trying to make the sport popular. If you are good in the BVI, you will get a chance to play."

Bickerton grew up on the English south coast and on a trip back there he met Dan Neville, who was on the coaching staff at Bournemouth. The pair stayed in touch and after Neville left the Premier League club he ran a training camp in the BVI and was offered a job as assistant to national coach John Reilly.

Neville is also focused on youth and he arranged for a young side to visit Dorset in March last year, during which time they played against Southern League Premier Division South side Weymouth.

An inexperienced BVI team lost 6-1 but midfielder Caesar saw signs of improvement. "In the past, the ranking didn't reflect the amount of talent in the BVI. The preparation was very poor and that would cause us to lose badly," he says. "But since Mr Bickerton hired Coach Dan there has been a turnaround. There is potential there now.

> "Since Mr Bickerton hired Coach Dan there has been a turnaround. There is potential there now"
> BVI's most-capped player, Troy Caesar

"When I was younger we were losing 17-0 [to the Dominican Republic] but we were 0-0 for 70 minutes against Martinique."

Although they eventually lost 4-0 to Martinique in a qualifier for the new CONCACAF Nations League, a host of teenagers were involved, including 16-year-olds Charles Medway and Bailey Rowe, 17-year-old Liam Bok and 18-year-old Tshame Gallimore.

A qualifier against Bonaire in Anguilla in November was cancelled when the opposition failed to show up after their flight was cancelled. That fixture is being rescheduled, and along with the final Nations League fixture, against Turks & Caicos, it offers a winnable game as the BVI's revolution gathers pace. WS

Japan

MIKE PLASTOW

Villa is latest Spaniard to join Vissel

Striker links up with Iniesta in Kobe

Big-spending Vissel Kobe have once again been making all the headlines as the J.League prepares to kick off the 2019 season, announcing the addition of a third World Cup-winner, David Villa, to their increasingly star-studded squad.

Spain's all-time top scorer, 36-year-old Villa joins close friend, fellow countryman and former Barcelona team-mate Andres Iniesta, 34, and 33-year-old German striker Lukas Podolski at the league's most ambitious club.

Vissel's other big signings include 28-year-old Hotaru Yamaguchi from Cerezo Osaka – who himself is a veteran of two World Cups – to shore up midfield, and Kashima Antlers full-back Daigo Nishi. They were also linked with Lazio's Uruguay defender Martin Caceres, but he chose to return to Juventus on loan instead.

Friendly...Vissel Kobe's David Villa in action against Los Angeles

David Villa modestly chose to describe his main strength as "effort" on his unveiling in Japan

Vissel's self-proclaimed quest is to be Asia's number one team, although Spanish coach Juan Manuel Lillo's first challenge still remains to steer the side into a first Japanese title.

And it won't be easy. Podolski scored just five league goals in 2017 and five again last year. After Iniesta joined last summer, Vissel slumped from sixth in the table to a flirtation with relegation. And while Villa certainly performed well at New York City in MLS, scoring 80 times in 124 games, he modestly chose to describe his main strength as "effort" on his unveiling in Japan.

Experience...Douglas Vieira has joined Sanfrecce Hiroshima

Kawasaki Frontale, the runaway champions in 2018, start their campaign for a third consecutive title with three new Brazilians following the departure of defenders Elsinho to Shimizu S-Pulse and Eduardo to newly promoted Matsumoto Yamaga. Defensive midfielder Eduardo Neto left in the summer for Nagoya Grampus.

The new faces are striker Leandro Damiao from Santos, who was capped 17 times by Brazil from 2011 to 2013, and two defenders: Maguinho from Vila Nova and Jesiel on loan from Atletico Mineiro.

Akihiro Ienaga, the 2018 J.League Player of the Year, captain Yu Kobayashi, the 2017 J.League Player of the Year and top scorer, and 38-year-old creative midfielder Kengo Nakamura will again be called upon to provide the backbone of a team where the quality is proven and only continues to grow.

Sanfrecce Hiroshima, the runaway leaders in the first half of last season, slumped to seven losses and two draws in their last nine league games but have largely stuck by the same squad. The main addition is that of experienced striker Douglas Vieira from Tokyo Verdy.

Third-placed Kashima are largely staying with the squad that won last year's Asian Champions League. Their main new face is dependable striker Sho Ito from Yokohama F.Marinos.

Kashima have, however, bid farewell to Mitsuo Ogasawara, who played at the 2002 and 2006 World Cups and has now retired at the age of 39. Gen Shoji, who played at the 2018 World Cup, has left for Toulouse, and with Nishi's departure to Kobe there could be holes to attend to at the back.

Other veterans hanging up their boots include well-travelled Junichi Inamoto at Hokkaido Consadole Sapporo, who was capped 82 times by Japan and is now 39 years of age, and 42-year-old Nagoya Grampus goalkeeper Seigo Narazaki, who was capped

KEY DATES

SEASON STARTS
February 22, 2019
SEASONS ENDS
December 6, 2019

Preview

Veteran... Kazuyoshi Miura

77 times, was a squad member at four World Cups and played in all of Japan's games at the 2002 tournament.

Special mention also has to be made of one player who just goes on and on, seemingly with no thoughts yet of retirement.

Kazuyoshi Miura, who was the country's star striker of the mid-1990s, is still on the books of second division Yokohama, where he has been since 2005, and he will start the new season at the grand old age of 51. He scored 55 goals in 89 appearances for Japan and was the J.League and Asian Player of the Year in 1993.

Miura was the boy who broke all the rules of Japanese society by quitting school at the age of 15 to play football in Brazil and got his break at Santos in 1986. Today, he breaks age-related rules.

His goal against Thespa Kusatsu in March 2017, at the age of 50 years and 14 days, now stands in the *Guinness Book of Records* ahead of Stanley Matthews' previous record of 50 years and five days, set in 1965. His last appearance, for one minute against Oita Trinita in November last year, set the current Japanese oldest appearance record of 51 years, eight months and nine days.

In the J.League, "King Kazu" never stops. WS

➤ Deloitte Football Money League with record revenues of €750.9m for the 2017-18 season, ahead of Barcelona and Manchester United.

Friday January 25

ENGLAND: Alexis Sanchez scores on his return to Arsenal in the FA Cup as Manchester United win 3-1.
FRANCE: Leonardo Jardim takes charge of Monaco again following the dismissal of Thierry Henry.
ITALY: Erick Thohir sells his 31.05 per cent share in Internazionale to Hong Kong-based fund LionRock Capital, ending his five-and-a-half-year association with the club.
SCOTLAND: Hibernian suspend coach Neil Lennon following a row with several members of staff.

Saturday January 26

CAMEROON: The top-flight Elite One fails to get underway as Eding Sport and Yong Sports Academy boycott their opening fixture over a dispute with Pierre Semengue, the head of the country's Professional Football League.
NIGERIA: A police statement confirms that Abdullahi Biffo, the coach of Nigerian Premier League side Katsina United who was kidnapped in northern Nigeria on January 7, has been released.

Sunday January 27

GERMANY: Hanover sack coach Andre Breitenreiter after their 5-1 defeat at Borussia Dortmund the previous day.
HOLLAND: Robin Van Persie scores twice as Feyenoord thrash Ajax 6-2.
SIERRA LEONE: East End Lions beat Mighty Blackpool 1-0 as league football returns to Sierra Leone after a four-and-a-half year absence, despite the country still being suspended by FIFA.
SPAIN: Barcelona win 2-0 away to Girona in a game initially pencilled in to be staged in Miami.

Monday January 28

CAF: This year's African Nations Cup, which was due to run from June 15 to July 13, is moved to allow players to rest after the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and will now begin on June 21, with the Final set for July 19.
ENGLAND: Roy Keane returns to Championship club Nottingham Forest – where he spent three years as a player – to become assistant to Martin O'Neill, who he worked alongside with the Republic of Ireland.
IRAN: Carlos Queiroz quits as Iran coach following a 3-0 defeat by Japan in the Asian Cup semi-finals.
ITALY: Bologna, three points from safety in Serie A, replace Filippo Inzaghi with their former coach Sinisa Mihajlovic.
SPAIN: After six players leave over unpaid wages, second-tier Reus Deportiu are banned from playing professionally for three years.

Tuesday January 29

FRANCE: Paris Saint-Germain sign Argentinian midfielder Leandro Paredes from Zenit for €47m.
SCOTLAND: Hamilton Academical part company with Martin Canning after picking up just one point from their last eight league games.
SPAIN: Villarreal sack Luis Garcia after nine games in charge and replace him with Javier Calleja, who they had dismissed in December.
UKRAINE: International defender Yaroslav Rakitskiy prompts criticism for leaving Shakhtar Donetsk to join Russian side Zenit with tensions high after Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014 and its support for separatists in the eastern part of Ukraine.

Wednesday January 30

FRANCE: Paris Saint-Germain reveal Neymar will be out for 10 weeks after breaking a metatarsal in a 2-0 French Cup victory against Strasbourg the previous Wednesday.
GERMANY: Schalke pay €11m for 18-year-old winger Rabbi Matondo, who had never made a first-team appearance for Manchester City,
ITALY: Holders Juventus go out of the Italian Cup, losing 3-0 to Atalanta in the quarter-finals, while Fiorentina thrash Roma 7-1.
SCOTLAND: Neil Lennon leaves Hibernian by "mutual consent" following his suspension on Friday.
SOMALIA: Dekedaha beat Banadir 3-0 to win the Somalia Super Cup.
SPAIN: Barcelona overturn a two-goal first-leg deficit to beat Sevilla 2-1 and reach the Spanish Cup semi-finals.

Thursday January 31

USA: Nashville confirm they will enter MLS in the 2020 season and play at the home of gridiron side Tennessee Titans until their own stadium is ready.

Friday February 1

ASIAN CUP: Qatar beat Japan 3-1 in the Final to win the tournament for the first time.

Saturday February 2

GERMANY: Bayern Munich lose ➤

➤ 3-1 at Bayer Leverkusen and slip seven points behind Bundesliga leaders Borussia Dortmund.
ITALY: Lecce's Serie B game with Ascoli is abandoned five seconds after kick-off following a head injury to midfielder Manuel Scavone.

Sunday February 3

BELGIUM: Ex Leicester City boss Nigel Pearson is sacked by Leuven, who are bottom of the second tier.
ENGLAND: Sergio Aguero's 14th hat-trick for Manchester City gives them a 3-1 victory over Arsenal at Etihad Stadium.
FRANCE: Runaway leaders Paris Saint-Germain lose in Ligue 1 for the first time this season, beaten 2-1 at Lyon.
PORTUGAL: Benfica win 4-2 away to Sporting and are now three points behind Porto.
QATAR: Al Duhail pay Portuguese side Portimonense €35m for Shoya Nakajima, setting a new record fee for a Japanese player.
SPAIN: Brazilian teenager Vinicius Junior scores his first goal in La Liga as Real Madrid beat Alaves 3-0.

Monday February 4

GUINEA: Ex-defender Mohamed Sylla, who played in all of Guinea's games at the 1994 and 1998 Africa Nations Cups, dies at the age of 44.

Tuesday February 5

ITALY: Local mayor Virginia Raggi says Roma are free to start work on their new stadium, which was given the all-clear at the end of 2017 but held up by the arrest of nine people linked to the arena's construction.
SWITZERLAND: Bottom of the Super League, Neuchatel Xamax sack Michel Decastel and promote his assistant Stephane Henchoz.

Wednesday February 6

FIFA: Gianni Infantino will serve for at least another four years as it is confirmed he will stand unopposed in June's presidential election.
FRANCE: Paris Saint-Germain need extra time before overcoming third-tier Villefranche 3-0 in the last 16 of the French Cup.
OMAN: Muhanna Said takes interim control of the national side after Pim Verbeek steps down.
SPAIN: Cup holders Barcelona draw 1-1 at home with Real Madrid in the first leg of their semi-final.

Thursday February 7

CHINA: Shandong Luneng win Hong Kong's Lunar New Year Cup,

South America Under-20s

TIM VICKERY

Brazil miss out on World Cup

Junior side are failing on a regular basis

Eight years ago, Neymar and Lucas Moura shone for Brazil in the South American Under-20 Championship but then missed the World Cup at that level as they were at the Copa America with the senior squad, leaving the stage clear for Oscar, Philippe Coutinho and Casemiro to grab the glory as Brazil were crowned under-20 world champions in Colombia.

Since then, however, the country's record at under-20 level has been dismal.

While a final-day 1-0 victory over Argentina restored a little morale at this year's continental tournament in Chile, Brazil were in need of a three-goal margin – something that always looked beyond a team that scored just six times in nine games – and they will miss out on the World Cup for the second consecutive time and for the third in the last four.

But this does not mean good players are no longer being produced, with the current group including several players who will surely be able to shrug off such a setback. Attacking midfielder Rodrygo was a huge disappointment in Chile but he will join Real Madrid in the middle of the year, while Barcelona have picked up right-back Emerson and are going to loan him to Real Betis. In addition to these, busy midfielder Marcos Antonio will move from Portugal's Estoril to Shakhtar Donetsk and Phelipe Megiolaro was the outstanding goalkeeper on show.

It could be argued that things would have been different had the likes of Vinicius Junior and Paulinho been released by Real Madrid and Bayer Leverkusen respectively, but their presence would not have altered the fundamental structure of the side – and, anyway,

Out...Brazil fail again

Brazil have stood still and their under-20 team is full of the vices of the country's club game

Disappointing ...Rodrygo

beating Sagan Tosu of Japan 3-1 in the Final.
COLOMBIA: Carlos Queiroz is appointed national coach, with the Portuguese becoming Colombia's first European boss in 40 years.
ENGLAND: Police confirm that a body recovered from the wreckage of a crashed plane is that of Cardiff City player Emiliano Sala.
UEFA: Aleksander Ceferin is re-elected unopposed as president of European football's governing body.

Friday February 8

BRAZIL: Ten people die as a fire engulfs a dormitory at Ninho de Urubu, the youth-team training base of Flamengo.

Saturday February 9

ECUADOR: The new season starts, with defending champions LDU Quito beating Olmedo 3-2.
GERMANY: Robert Lewandowski scores his 100th Allianz Arena goal for Bayern Munich as they beat Schalke 3-1.
SOUTH AFRICA: Orlando Pirates stretch their unbeaten run against Kaizer Chiefs to 12 games with a 1-1 draw.
SPAIN: Real Madrid win 3-1 at Atletico Madrid to leapfrog their local rivals and go second, behind Barcelona, in La Liga.

Sunday February 10

EGYPT: Ismaily are reinstated in the CAF Champions League following a successful appeal against their earlier expulsion.
ENGLAND: Chelsea suffer their heaviest defeat since 1991, losing 6-0 at Manchester City.
ITALY: Cristiano Ronaldo scores his 20th goal for Juventus goal as they win 3-0 at Sassuolo to go 11 points clear at the top of Serie A.
PORTUGAL: Benfica beat Nacional 10-0 and are the first team to get double figures in a Portuguese top-flight game since 1965.
SPAIN: Barcelona fail to score in the league for the first time in 38 games as they draw 0-0 away at Athletic Bilbao.

Monday February 11

BRAZIL: Three days after tragedy struck Flamengo, a fire where fellow Rio de Janeiro side Bangu are training puts two players in hospital with smoke inhalation.
ENGLAND: Paul Scholes resigns as director of non-league Salford City – but retains his 10 per cent share in the club – to become manager ➤

Champions ...Ecuador

almost all the teams also had important players missing for one reason or another.

Much of South America has been quick to see the importance of the under-20s as a conveyor belt to the senior ranks. Countries have invested time and money in preparation, and the results were clear at this year's tournament. While there may have been little in the way of sparkling, attacking football, the defending – both in terms of collective organisation and of individual quality – was impressive. Teams have become harder to beat.

Uruguay in their highly successful youth-development work make a point of trying to identify players with the speed of movement, thought and technical execution to survive in top-level football. In other words, they are not aiming to produce players for their domestic game.

Brazil, meanwhile, appear to have stood still and their current under-20 team is full of the vices of the country's contemporary club game. In particular, the team features a pair of gangling centre-backs who offer little construction from deep, necessitating a holding midfielder to sit in front and protect. The fluidity of the passing movements is therefore immediately restricted. This is a common feature of Brazilian club football – as is the presence, in wide attacking areas, of some whose only thought is to charge forward in a straight line.

With Brazil missing out, South America's representatives in Poland at the World Cup in May will be continental champions Ecuador, runners-up Argentina, and Uruguay and Colombia, who finished third and fourth respectively. WS

➤ of Oldham Athletic.
FIFA: Former executive member Worawi Makudi, who is the ex-president of the Football Association of Thailand, has his ban from all football-related activities for "forgery and falsification" overturned by the Court of Arbitration for Sport.
ITALY: Arsenal's Aaron Ramsey signs a pre-contract to join Juventus in the summer in a deal that will earn him a reported £400,000 a week, making him the highest-earning British player of all time based on basic salary.
THAILAND: Hakeem Al Araibi, who plays in Australia after being granted political asylum, is freed from jail in Bangkok after Bahrain withdraws its extradition request.
TURKEY: Mircea Lucescu's contract as national coach is "mutually terminated" by the Federation.

Tuesday February 12

ENGLAND: Gordon Banks, who was England's goalkeeper when they won the World Cup in 1966, dies aged 81.
GERMANY: Borussia Dortmund's flight to London for Wednesday's Champions League game against Tottenham Hotspur is delayed after 18-year-old England winger Jadon Sancho forgets his passport. Thomas Hitzlsperger is appointed sporting director of Stuttgart.
UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE: Ole Gunnar Solskjaer suffers his first defeat as Manchester United manager and Paul Pogba is sent off as they lose 2-0 at home to Paris Saint-Germain. Nicolo Zaniolo scores both goals as Roma win 2-1 at home to Porto.

Wednesday February 13

CHINA: Dalian Yifang sign Napoli's long-serving captain Marek Hamsik for a reported €20m.
ENGLAND: Capped three times in friendlies by the Republic of Ireland, West Ham United midfielder Declan Rice announces that he now wishes to play for England.
PARAGUAY: Only appointed in September, Colombia's Juan Carlos Osorio quits as coach of Paraguay for "family reasons".
SCOTLAND: Former Barnsley and Leeds United boss Paul Heckingbottom is appointed manager of Hibernian.
UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE: Sergio Ramos makes his 600th appearance for Real Madrid as they win 2-1 at Ajax, while Tottenham Hotspur beat Borussia Dortmund 3-0 at Wembley. WS

African Nations Cup

MARK GLEESON

Bafana Bafana on the brink

South Africa will miss out if they lose to Libya

The last 10 places at this year's expanded African Nations Cup will be decided over the weekend of March 22-24, with South Africa facing the prospect of an embarrassing setback, while tiny Burundi and Lesotho are both one result away from first ever appearances at the finals.

South Africa, who won the title in 1996, are unbeaten in their group and have only conceded one goal in five qualifiers yet, bizarrely, they will miss out if they lose away to Libya in their last game.

They began Group E with a victory in Nigeria and looked set to go to the finals – even more so when it was then announced that the Nations Cup field would be expanded to 24 teams, with the first two in each of the 12 four-team groups qualifying.

However, goalless draws at home to Libya and away to Seychelles have left them in a precarious position. Nigeria have already secured top spot and Libya, who trail South Africa by two points, will leapfrog their opponents if they win in March.

South Africa's Stuart Baxter has already promised to quit if his team fail to qualify

Coach...Baxter

Libya are still forced to play "home" matches at neutral venues, usually in neighbouring Egypt or Tunisia, because of the tenuous security situation in their country and South Africa's Stuart Baxter has already promised to quit if his team fail to qualify. The English-born coach has been treading on thin ice after the 2018 World Cup qualifiers in which South Africa contrived to throw away a position of strength, losing home and away to Cape Verde – a country whose entire population would comfortably fit into one of Johannesburg's suburbs.

Failure for South Africa would be made even more embarrassing if there was a place in the finals for Lesotho, the tiny mountain kingdom completely surrounded by South Africa.

To get through, Lesotho must win away to Cape Verde, but a draw will do if Tanzania fail to beat Uganda, who are already through from Group L.

Burundi stand a much better chance. They need only to draw their last Group C game, against Gabon, whose talisman striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang is increasingly picking which games he will play in for the national team and which he will not. If there is any arduous travel involved, he is suddenly injured.

DR Congo should beat Liberia at home in their last game to go through from Group G, along with Zimbabwe who will advance with a home draw against Congo.

Cameroon should get the point they need at home against Comoros to secure their finals berth but their continued participation is the subject of a protest from the tiny island nation, who have taken the issue to Court for Arbitration in Sport (CAS).

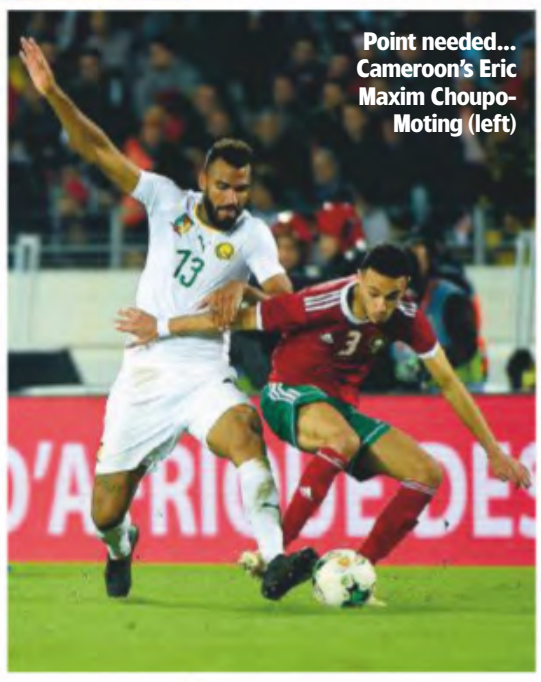
Comoros want Cameroon to be totally disqualified from the 2019 tournament in the wake of their being stripped of the hosting of the event, opening a potential path for the small Indian Ocean island to qualify for the finals for the first time.

Comoros want CAF to invoke article 92 of the Nations Cup regulations which says that if a country is stripped of the hosting of a finals it is disqualified, as happened to Morocco when they were stripped of the 2015 finals.

But with CAF seemingly ignoring the issue, Comoros have sought relief from CAS in Switzerland

"I know that Cameroon is an important country in African football, but the rules are the same for everyone," says Comoros Football Federation president Said Athoumane. "If we start by favouring so-and-so on the pretext that they are a big name in continental football, this will not be fair." WS

Goalless...Libya's Muaid Ellafi stops Sifiso Hlanti of South Africa



Point needed... Cameroon's Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting (left)

ALREADY QUALIFIED

GROUP A Madagascar, Senegal
GROUP B Morocco
GROUP C Mali
GROUP D Algeria
GROUP E Nigeria
GROUP F Kenya, Ghana
GROUP H Guinea, Ivory Coast
GROUP I Mauritania
GROUP J Egypt, Tunisia
GROUP L Uganda

COULD STILL QUALIFY

GROUP B Cameroon, Comoros
GROUP C Burundi, Gabon
GROUP D Benin, Gambia, Togo
GROUP E Libya, South Africa
GROUP G Congo, DR Congo, Liberia, Zimbabwe
GROUP I Angola, Burkina Faso
GROUP K Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Namibia
GROUP L Cape Verde Islands, Lesotho, Tanzania

ESM XI

EUROPEAN SPORTS MEDIA

JANUARY 2018

HOW IT WORKS Every month, journalists from each member of the European Sports Media group select their first XI based on the best individual performances from Europe's top competitions. For details of how each ESM member voted, visit worldsoccer.com/esm11
SEASON RANKINGS Cumulative votes through the season

GOALKEEPERS

ALISSON (Liverpool)	10
Jan OBLAK (Atletico Madrid)	10
Marc-Andre TER STEGEN (Barcelona)	10
EDERSON (Manchester City)	7
David DE GEA (Manchester United)	6
Wojciech SZCZESNY (Juventus)	5
Thibaut COURTOIS (Real Madrid)	4
Gianluigi DONNARUMMA (Milan)	3
Roman BURKI (Borussia Dortmund)	1
Petr CECH (Arsenal)	1
Ralf FAHRMANN (Schalke)	1
Hugo LLORIS (Tottenham Hotspur)	1
Mike MAIGNAN (Lille)	1
Jordi MASIP (Real Valladolid)	1
NETO (Valencia)	1
Oier OLAZABAL (Levante)	1
Rui PATRICIO (Wolverhampton Wanderers)	1
Jordan PICKFORD (Everton)	1

DEFENDERS

Virgil VAN DIJK (Liverpool)	32
Jordi ALBA (Barcelona)	16
Giorgio CHIELLINI (Juventus)	15
Leonardo BONUCCI (Juventus)	14
Ashraf HAKIMI (Borussia Dortmund)	13
ALEX SANDRO (Juventus)	11
Joao CANCELO (Juventus)	11
Gerard PIQUE (Barcelona)	9
MARQUINHOS (Paris Saint-Germain)	8
Sergio RAMOS (Real Madrid)	8
Joshua KIMMICH (Bayern Munich)	7
Thomas MEUNIER (Paris Saint-Germain)	7
Lukasz PISZCZEK (Borussia Dortmund)	7
Kalidou KOULIBALY (Napoli)	6
Aymeric LAPORTE (Manchester City)	6
Andrew ROBERTSON (Liverpool)	5
Trent ALEXANDER-ARNOLD (Liverpool)	4
Marcos ALONSO (Chelsea)	4
Juan BERNAT (Paris Saint-Germain)	4
Kyle WALKER (Manchester City)	4
Manuel AKANJI (Borussia Dortmund)	3
Santiago ARIAS (Atletico Madrid)	3
DAVID LUIZ (Chelsea)	3
Jose GIMENEZ (Atletico Madrid)	3
Milan SKRINIAR (Internazionale)	3
Matthijs DE LIGT (Ajax)	2
Nico ELVEDI (Borussia Monchengladbach)	2
Joe GOMEZ (Liverpool)	2
Lucas HERNANDEZ (Atletico Madrid)	2
Vincent KOMPANY (Manchester City)	2
MARCELO (Real Madrid)	2
Thiago SILVA (Paris Saint-Germain)	2
David ALABA (Bayern Munich)	1
Daley BLIND (Ajax)	1
Dani CARVAJAL (Real Madrid)	1
Abdou DIALO (Borussia Dortmund)	1
EDER MILITAO (Porto)	1
Junior FIRPO (Real Betis)	1
Matthias GINTER (Borussia M'gladbach)	1
Diego GODIN (Atletico Madrid)	1
Makoto HASEBE (Eintracht Frankfurt)	1
Mats HUMMELS (Bayern Munich)	1
Thilo KEHRER (Paris Saint-Germain)	1
Laurent KOSCIELNY (Arsenal)	1
Kenny LALA (Strasbourg)	1
Victor LINEDLOF (Manchester United)	1
Dejan LOVREN (Liverpool)	1
MARCELO (Lyon)	1
Benjamin MENDY (Manchester City)	1
Ferland MENDY (Lyon)	1
Nicolas OTAMENDI (Manchester City)	1
Sokratis PAPASTATHOPOULOS (Arsenal)	1
Benjamin PAVARD (Stuttgart)	1
Daniele RUGANI (Juventus)	1
Sergi ROBERTO (Barcelona)	1
Nico SCHULZ (Hoffenheim)	1
Nelson SEMEDO (Barcelona)	1
Nicolas TAGLIAFICO (Ajax)	1
Alex TELLES (Porto)	1
Omer TOPRAK (Borussia Dortmund)	1
Kieran TRIPPIER (Tottenham Hotspur)	1

MIDFIELDERS

Eden HAZARD (Chelsea)	22
Marco REUS (Borussia Dortmund)	17
Paul POGBA (Manchester United)	14
David SILVA (Manchester City)	12
Axel WITSEL (Borussia Dortmund)	11
Leroy SANE (Manchester City)	9
Jadon SANCHO (Borussia Dortmund)	8
Leon GORETZKA (Bayern Munich)	7
N'Golo KANTE (Chelsea)	7
Philippe COUTINHO (Barcelona)	5
Christian ERIKSEN (Tottenham Hotspur)	5
FERNANDINHO (Manchester City)	5
JORGINHO (Chelsea)	5
Thorgan HAZARD (Borussia M'gladbach)	4
Miralem PJANIC (Juventus)	4
Bernardo SILVA (Manchester City)	4
ARTHUR (Barcelona)	3
Nicolas PEPE (Lille)	3
Pablo SARABIA (Sevilla)	3
Rodrigo BETANCUR (Juventus)	2
Kevin DE BRUYNE (Manchester City)	2
Thomas DELANEY (Borussia Dortmund)	2
Angel DI MARIA (Paris Saint-Germain)	2
ISCO (Real Madrid)	2
Blaise MATUIDI (Juventus)	2
James MILNER (Liverpool)	2
Luka MODRIC (Real Madrid)	2
SAUL NIGUEZ (Atletico Madrid)	2
Cengiz UNDER (Roma)	2
Nicolo ZANIOLO (Roma)	2
Ever BANEGA (Sevilla)	1
Ross BARKLEY (Chelsea)	1
Sergio BUSQUETS (Barcelona)	1
Memphis DEPAY (Lyon)	1
Javairo DILROSUN (Hertha Berlin)	1
Julian DRAXLER (Paris Saint-Germain)	1
Ondrej DUDA (Hertha Berlin)	1
FABINHO (Liverpool)	1
Bruno FERNANDES (Sporting)	1
Andre GOMES (Everton)	1
Ilkay GUNDOGAN (Mancheser City)	1
Hector HERRERA (Porto)	1
Franck KESSIE (Milan)	1
Sami KHEDIRA (Juventus)	1
Giovani LO CELSO (Real Betis)	1
Riyad MAHREZ (Manchester City)	1
Sergej MILINKOVIC-SAVIC (Lazio)	1
Joao MOUTINHO (Wolves)	1
Jesus NAVAS (Sevilla)	1
Thomas PARTEY (Atletico Madrid)	1
Matteo POLITANO (Internazionale)	1
Ivan RAKITIC (Barcelona)	1
RODRI (Valencia)	1
SON Heung-min (Tottenham Hotspur)	1
Lucas TORREIRA (Arsenal)	1
Oliver TORRES (Porto)	1
Marco VERRATTI (Paris Saint-Germain)	1
Georginio WIJNALDUM (Liverpool)	1
WILLIAN (Chelsea)	1

FORWARDS

Lionel MESSI (Barcelona)	38
Cristiano RONALDO (Juventus)	20
Kylian MBAPPE (Paris Saint-Germain)	14
Paco ALCACER (Borussia Dortmund)	11
Mohamed SALAH (Liverpool)	11
Krzysztof PIATEK (Genoa/Milan)	10
NEYMAR (Paris Saint-Germain)	8
Andre SILVA (Sevilla)	8
Sergio AGUERO (Manchester City)	7
Raheem STERLING (Manchester City)	7
Luis SUAREZ (Barcelona)	7
Duvan ZAPATA (Atalanta)	7
Pierre-Emerick AUBAMEYANG (Arsenal)	6
Mauro ICARDI (Internazionale)	6
Harry KANE (Tottenham Hotrspur)	4
Fabio QUAGLIARELLA (Sampdoria)	4
Edinson CAVANI (Paris Saint-Germain)	3
Ousmane DEMBELE (Barcelona)	3
Dries MERTENS (Napoli)	3
Karim BENZEMA (Real Madrid)	2
Roberto FIRMINO (Liverpool)	2
Lorenzo INSIGNE (Napoli)	2
Luka JOVIC (Eintracht Frankfurt)	2
Marcus RASHFORD (Manchester United)	2
Hakim ZIYECH (Ajax)	2
Gareth BALE (Real Madrid)	1
Sebastien HALLER (Eintracht Frankfurt)	1
Gonzalo HIGUAIN (Chelsea)	1
Borja IGLESIAS (Espanyol)	1
Robert LEWANDOWSKI (Bayern Munich)	1
Sadio MANE (Liverpool)	1
Cristhian STUANI (Girona)	1

Internationals

ASIAN CUP: FINALS

Played in United Arab Emirates

Group A

Jan 5 - Abu Dhabi
United Arab Emirates 1 (Khalil pen 88)
Bahrain 1 (Al Romaihi 78)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 33,878. **Ref:** Makhadmeh (Jor)
UAE: Eisa - Al Ahbabi, Khalifa Mubarak, Juma, Saleh, Khalfan Mubarak (Rashid 54), Salmeen, A Abdulrahman (M Abdulrahman 54), I Al Hammadi, Mabkhout, Esmaeel (Khalil 81).
Bahrain: Alawi - Al Shamsan, Issa, Al Hayam, Juma (Marhoon 87), Al Safi, Saeed, Madan (Al Husaini 90+3), Al Aswad, Rashid (Helal 81), Al Romaihi.

Jan 6 - Abu Dhabi
Thailand 1 (Teerasil 33)
India 4 (Chhetri pen 27, 46, Thapa 68, Lalpekhlua 80)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 3,250. **Ref:** Liu (HK)
Thailand: Chatchai - Tristan, Chalermpong, Pansa, Theerathon, Thitipan, Sanrawat (Korrakot 58), Adisak (Sumanya 79), Chanathip (Siroch 73), Supachai, Teerasil.
India: Singh Sandhu - Kotal, Jhingan, Bose, Edathodika, U Singh, Thapa (Lalpekhlua 78), Halder (Germanpreet Singh 87), Narzary, Kuruniyan (Borges 78), Chhetri.

Jan10 - Dubai
Bahrain 0
Thailand 1 (Chanathip 58)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 2,720. **Ref:** Beath (Aus)
Bahrain: Alawi - Issa, Al Shamsan, Al Hayam, Juma (Al Husaini 64), Al Safi, Al Aswad, Madan (Al Humaidan 79), Marhoon (Helal 65), Saeed, Al Romaihi.
Thailand: Siwarak - Tristan, Adisorn (Mika 90+2), Pansa, Suphan, Theerathon, Adisak (Supachai 80), Thitipan, Tanaboon (Sanrawat 68), Chanathip, Teerasil.

Jan10 - Abu Dhabi
India 0
United Arab Emirates 2 (Khalfan Mubarak 41, Mabkhout 88)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 43,206. **Ref:** Ramos (Mex)
India: Singh Sandhu - Kotal, Jhingan, Edathodika, Bose, U Singh (J Singh 79), Thapa (Borges 70), Halder, Narzary (Lalpekhlua 46), Kuruniyan, Chhetri.
UAE: Eisa - Al Ahbabi, Khalifa Mubarak, I Ahmed, Saleh, Esmaeel (Hassan 63), Salmeen, A Abdulrahman (M Ahmed 75), I Al Hammadi, Khalfan Mubarak (Matar 85), Mabkhout.

Jan14 - Al Ain
United Arab Emirates 1 (Mabkhout 7)
Thailand 1 (Thitipan 41)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 17,809. **Ref:** Sato (Jap)
UAE: Eisa - Al Ahbabi (M Abdulrahman 46), I Ahmed, Khalifa Mubarak, M Ahmed, Saleh, Khalfan Mubarak (Matar 84), Hassan, Salmeen, I Al Hammadi (Khalil 74), Mabkhout.
Thailand: Siwarak - Theerathon, Adisorn, Suphan, Mika (Chalermpong 31), Tristan, Thitipan, Tanaboon (Pokklaw 90), Chanathip, Adisak (Supachai 64), Teerasil.

Jan14 - Sharjah
India 0
Bahrain 1 (Rashid pen 90+1)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 11,417. **Ref:** Tantashev (Uzb)
India: Singh Sandhu - Kotal, Jhingan, Edathodika (S R Singh 4), Bose, U Singh, Borges, Halder, Narzary (Thapa 79), Kuruniyan (Lalpekhlua 46), Chhetri.
Bahrain: Alawi - Issa, Al Shamsan, Al Hayam, Juma (Al Husaini 78), Al Safi, Al Aswad, Madan (Marhoon 55), Rashid, Saeed, Al Romaihi (Helal 61).

ASIAN CUP: FINALS – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
UAE (Q)	3	1	2	0	4	2	5
Thailand (Q)	3	1	1	1	3	5	4
Bahrain (Q)	3	1	1	1	2	2	4
India	3	1	0	2	4	4	3

Group B

Jan 6 - Al Ain
Australia 0
Jordan 1 (Bani Yaseen 26)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 4,934. **Ref:** Al Kaf (Oma)
Australia: Ryan - Risdon (Grant 46), Degenek, Sainsbury, Behich, Milligan, Luongo (Irvine 74), Mabil, Rogic, Kruse (Ikonomidis 55), Maclaren.
Jordan: Shafi - Shelbaieh, Khattab, Bani Yaseen, Al Ajalin, Abdel-Rahman, Murjan (Samir 90), Al Rawashdeh, Al Bakhit (Ersan 88), Bani Attiah, Al Taamari (Faisal 72).

Jan 6 - Sharjah
Syria 0
Palestine 0
Att: 8,471. **Ref:** Irmatov (Uzb)
Syria: Alma - Al Salih, Al Baour, Al Anizan, Al Ajan, Haj Mohamad (Ashkar 81), Z Midani (Osman 73), Omari (Kalfa 41), Khribin, F Youssef, Al Somah.
Palestine: Hamadeh - Al Battat, Saleh, Bahdari, Jaber, Darweesh, Cantillana (Shaban 76), Seyam, Tamburrini (Norambuena 64), Maraaba, Islame (Wadi 82). *Sent off: Saleh 68.*

Jan10 - Al Ain
Jordan 2 (Al Taamari 26, Khattab 43)
Syria 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 9,152. **Ref:** Kim Dong-jin (SKo)
Jordan: Shafi - Shelbaieh, Bani Yaseen, Al Ajalin, Khattab, Al Rawashdeh (Samir 52), Abdel-Rahman, Murjan, Bani Attiah, Al Bakhit, Al Taamari (Ersan 85).
Syria: Alma - Al Salih, F Youssef (Kalfa 70), Al Baour (Mobayed 82), Al Ajan, Al Anizan, Haj Mohamad, Osman, Mardikian (Al Mawas 46), Khribin, Al Somah.

Jan11 - Dubai
Palestine 0
Australia 3 (Maclaren 18, Mabil 20, Giannou 90)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 11,915. **Ref:** Kovalenko (Uzb)
Palestine: Hamadeh - Al Battat, Bahdari, Norambuena, Jaber, Wadi (Salem 77), Darweesh, Shaban, Albadawi (Bassim 71), Seyam, Cantillana (Dabbagh 57).
Australia: Ryan - Grant, Degenek, Sainsbury, Behich, Milligan, Irvine, Mabil (Kruse 87), Rogic (Luongo 75), Ikonomidis, Maclaren (Giannou 82).

Jan15 - Al Ain
Australia 3 (Mabil 41, Ikonomidis 54, Rogic 90+3)
Syria 2 (Khribin 43, Al Somah pen 80)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 10,492. **Ref:** Ramos (Mex)
Australia: Ryan - Grant, Degenek, Milligan, Behich, Irvine, Luongo (Jurman 90+1), Mabil (Kruse 82), Rogic, Ikonomidis, Maclaren (Giannou 68).
Syria: Alma - Al Jwayed (Al Anizan 74), O Midani, Al Salih, Al Ajan, Al Mawas, Haj Mohamad, Mobayed (Z Midani 83), Khribin, Osman (F Youssef 72), Al Somah.

Jan15 - Abu Dhabi
Palestine 0
Jordan 0
Att: 20,843. **Ref:** Sarray (Irq)
Palestine: Hamadeh - Bassim (Norambuena 88), Bahdari, Al Battat, Jaber, Dabbagh, Darweesh (Albadawi 79), Saleh, Seyam, Islame (Salem 62), Wadi.
Jordan: Shafi - Shelbaieh, Khattab, Bani Yaseen, Haddad, Bani Attiah, Abdel-Rahman, Ersan (Rateb 82), Murjan (Al Qarra 63), Al Bakhit, Samir.

ASIAN CUP: FINALS – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Jordan (Q)	3	2	1	0	3	0	7
Australia (Q)	3	2	0	1	6	3	6
Palestine	3	0	2	1	0	3	2
Syria	3	0	1	2	2	5	1

Group C

Jan 7 - Al Ain
China 2 (Matyash og 50, Yu Dabao 78)
Kyrgyzstan 1 (Israilov 42)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 1,839. **Ref:** Mohammed (UAE)
China: Yan Junling - Zhang Chengdong (Liu Yiming 89), Zhang Linpeng, Shi Ke (Hao Junmin 46), Feng Xiaoting, Liu Yang, Wu Xi, Chi Zhongguo, Jin Jingdao (Yu Dabao 24), Gao Lin, Wu Lei.
Kyrgyzstan: Matyash - Kichin, Israilov (Zemlianukhin 61), Tagoe, Kozubaev, Sagynbaev, Zhyrgalbek Uulu, Musabekov, Bernhardt (Sydykov 82), Murzaev, Lux (Batyrkanov 88).

Jan 7 - Dubai
South Korea 1 (Hwang Ui-jo 67)
Philippines 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 3,185. **Ref:** Shukralla (Bhn)
South Korea: Kim Seung-gyu - Lee Yong, Kim Min-jae, Kim Young-gwon, Kim Jin-su, Jung Woo-young, Ki Sung-yueng (Hwang In-beom 58), Lee Jae-sung (Ju Se-jong 86), Koo Ja-cheol (Lee Chung-yong 64), Hwang Hee-chan, Hwang Ui-jo.
Philippines: Falkesgaard - Woodland, Silva, Palla, Sato, Manuel Ott (Reed 78), Strauss (P Younghusband 89), Ingreso (Ramsay 75), Schrock, Reichelt, Patino.

Jan11 - Abu Dhabi
Philippines 0
China 3 (Wu Lei 40, 66, Yu Dabao 80)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 16,013. **Ref:** Kimura (Jap)
Philippines: Falkesgaard - Silva, Woodland, De Murga (P Younghusband 66), Sato, Ingreso, Strauss (Manuel Ott 85), Schrock, Palla, Reichelt (Dizon 88), Patino.
China: Yan Junling - Zhang Linpeng, Feng Xiaoting, Shi Ke, Wu Xi, Zhao Xuri (Yu Hanchao 72), Zheng Zhi (Chi Zhongguo 83), Hao Junmin, Liu Yang, Gao Lin (Yu Dabao 80), Wu Lei.

Jan11 - Al Ain
Kyrgyzstan 0
South Korea 1 (Kim Min-jae 41)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 4,893. **Ref:** Al Marri (Qat)
Kyrgyzstan: Kadyrbekov - Zhyrgalbek Uulu, Tagoe, Kozubaev, Kichin, Israilov (Rustamov 81), Bernhardt (Duyshobekov 77), Sydykov (Lux 69), Musabekov, Sagynbaev, Murzaev.
South Korea: Kim Seung-gyu - Lee Yong, Kim Min-jae, Hong Chul, Kim Young-gwon, Hwang Hee-chan, Hwang In-beom, Jung Woo-young, Koo Ja-cheol (Ju Se-jong 63), Lee Chung-yong, Hwang Ui-jo (Ji Dong-won 82).

Jan16 - Abu Dhabi
South Korea 2 (Hwang Ui-jo pen 14, Kim Min-jae 51)
China 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 13,579. **Ref:** Al Jassim (Qat)
South Korea: Kim Seung-gyu - Kim Moon-hwan, Kim Min-jae, Kim Young-gwon, Kim Jin-su, Hwang In-beom, Jung Woo-young, Hwang Hee-chan, Lee Chung-yong (Ju Se-jong 81), Son Heung-min (Koo Ja-cheol 89), Hwang Ui-jo (Ji Dong-won 70).
China: Yan Junling - Liu Yiming, Zhang Linpeng, Shi Ke, Liu Yang (Yu Hanchao 74), Zheng Zhi (Chi Zhongguo 57), Zhang Chengdong, Zhao Xuri, Wu Xi (Gao Lin 61), Yu Dabao, Jin Jingdao.

Jan16 - Dubai
Kyrgyzstan 3 (Lux 24, 51, 77)
Philippines 1 (Schrock 80)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 4,217. **Ref:** Al Khudhayr (Sau)
Kyrgyzstan: Kadyrbekov - Iusupov, Kozubaev, Kichin, Zhyrgalbek Uulu, Israilov (Sydykov 73), Bernhardt, Musabekov (Zemlianukhin 80), Sagynbaev, Murzaev (Rustamov 85), Lux.
Philippines: Falkesgaard - Palla (Dizon 75), Woodland, Reed (J Younghusband 60), Silva, Sato, Reichelt, Manuel Ott (P Younghusband 59), Schrock, Ingreso, Patino.

ASIAN CUP: FINALS – GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sth Korea (Q)	3	3	0	0	4	0	9
China (Q)	3	2	0	1	5	3	6
Kyrgyzstan (Q)	3	1	0	2	4	4	3
Philippines	3	0	0	3	1	7	0

Group D

Jan 7 - Abu Dhabi
Iran 5 (Taremi 12, 25, Dejagah 23, Azmoun 53, Ghoddos 78)
Yemen 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 5,301. **Ref:** Sato (Jap)
Iran: Beiranvand - Hajsafi, Rezaeian, Hosseini (Montazeri 46), Pouraliganji, Amiri (Ghoddos 60), Taremi (Ansarifard 71), Torabi, Dejagah, Ebrahimi, Azmoun.
Yemen: Al Sowadi - Omar (Hamsan 57), Ba Rowis, Al Radaei, Mahdi, Al Sarori, Al Haifi, Al Khyat (Abdulrab 64), Mansoor, Al Sasi, Al Matari (Dhabaan 87).

Jan 8 - Abu Dhabi
Iraq 3 (M Ali 35, Tariq 60, Adnan 90)
Vietnam 2 (Faez og 24, Nguyen Cong Phuong 42)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 4,779. **Ref:** Al Jassim (Qat)
Iraq: Hassan - Salim (Mhawi 78), Ibrahim, Putros (Resan 37), Faez, Adnan, Hadi, Yasin, Rashid (Tariq 58), H Ali, M Ali.
Vietnam: Dang Van Lam - Nguyen Trong Hoang, Nguyen Quang Hai, Que Ngoc Hai, Do Duy Manh, Bui Tien Dung, Nguyen Cong Phuong (Ha Duc Chinh 63), Do Hung Dung, Luong Xuan Truong (Nguyen Huy Hung 65), Nguyen Phong Hong Duy, Phan Van Duc (Doan Van Hau 82).

Jan12 - Abu Dhabi
Vietnam 0
Iran 2 (Azmoun 38, 69)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 10,841. **Ref:** Bin Jahari (Sin)
Vietnam: Dang Van Lam - Que Ngoc Hai, Do Duy Manh, Bui Tien Dung, Doan Van Hau, Nguyen Quang Hai, Pham Duc Huy (Ngan Van Dai 59), Nguyen Trong Hoang (Nguyen Tien Linh 84), Do Hung Dung, Phan Van Duc (Nguyen Van Toan 46), Nguyen Cong Phuong.
Iran: Beiranvand - Ghafouri, Pouraliganji, Kanaani, Hajsafi, Ebrahimi, Ghoddos, Dejagah, Amiri (Nourollahi 64), Taremi (Torabi 64), Azmoun (Ansarifard 79).

Jan12 - Sharjah
Yemen 0
Iraq 3 (M Ali 11, Resan 19, Abbas 90+1)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 9,757. **Ref:** Fu (Chn)
Yemen: Al Sowadi - Ba Rowis, Hamsan, Al Radaei, Mahdi, Al Haifi (Abdulrab 46), Al Matari, Al Ghazi (Al Khyat 30), Al Sasi (Dhabaan 83), Al Sarori, Mansoor.
Iraq: Hassan - Ibrahim, Adnan, Mhawi, Sulaka, Resan, Tariq (Attwan 55), Hadi, Yasin, H Ali (Dawood 88), M Ali (Abbas 71).

Jan16 - Al Ain
Vietnam 2 (Nguyen Quang Hai 38, Que Ngoc Hai pen 64)
Yemen 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 8,237. **Ref:** Al Kaf (Oma)
Vietnam: Dang Van Lam - Doan Van Hau, Bui Tien Dung, Que Ngoc Hai, Nguyen Phong Hong Duy, Do Hung Dung, Nguyen Trong Hoang, Luong Xuan Truong (Nguyen Tien Linh 53), Nguyen Quang Hai, Nguyen Cong Phuong (Tran Minh Vuong 82), Phan Van Duc (Nguyen Van Toan 72).
Yemen: Al Harsh - Ba Rowis, Mahdi, Hamsan (Al Gumaei 57), Boqshan, Al Sarori, Al Radaei, Al Khyat (Alos 76), Al Matari, Al Sasi, Mansoor (Dhabaan 25).

Jan16 - Dubai
Iran 0
Iraq 0
Att: 15,038. **Ref:** Irmatov (Uzb)
Iran: Beiranvand - Ghafouri, Cheshmi (Dejagah 80), Mohammadi, Hosseini, Amiri, Kanaani, Ghoddos (Torabi 75), Ebrahimi, Jahanbakhsh (Taremi 63), Azmoun.
Iraq: Hassan - Ibrahim, Faez, Adnan, Mhawi, Hadi, Attwan, H Ali (Dawood 77), Yasin (Resan 46), M Ali (Abbas 71), Tariq.

ASIAN CUP: FINALS – GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Iran (Q)	3	2	1	0	7	0	7
Iraq (Q)	3	2	1	0	6	2	7
Vietnam (Q)	3	1	0	2	4	5	3
Yemen	3	0	0	3	0	10	0

Group E

Jan 8 - Dubai
Saudi Arabia 4 (Bahebri 28, Al Fatil 37, Al Dawsari 70, Al Muwallad 87)
North Korea 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 5,075. **Ref:** Green (Aus)
Saudi Arabia: Al Owais - Al Burayk, Al Bulaihi, Al Fatil, Al Shahrani (Al Shamrani 82), Otayf, Bahebri (Al Saiari 78), Al Dawsari, Al Bishi (Ghareeb 71), Al Mogahwi, Al Muwallad.
North Korea: Ri Myong-guk - Kim Chol-bom, Kim Song-gi, An Song-il (Kim Kyong-hun 46), Ri Il-jin, Jang Kuk-chol (Ri Chang-ho 56), Han Kwang-song, Ri Un-chol, Ri Yong-jik (Rim Kwang-hyok 90+1), Jong Il-gwan, Pak Kwang-ryong. *Sent off: Han Kwang-song 44.*

Jan 9 - Al Ain
Qatar 2 (Al Rawi 65, Almoez Ali 79)
Lebanon 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 7,847. **Ref:** Ma (Chn)
Qatar: Al Sheeb - Pedro Miguel, Salman, Al Rawi, Madibo, Khoukhi, Boudiaf (Hatem 56), Abdulkarim Al Ali (A Hassan 62), Al Haidos (Alaaeldin 85), Almoez Ali, Akram Afif.
Lebanon: Khalil - Ismail, Oumari, F Michel (Ayass 77), Hamam, Faour, A Michel (N Matar 72), Jounaidi (M Haidar 84), Maatouk, El Helwe, Jradi.

Jan12 - Dubai
Lebanon 0
Saudi Arabia 2 (Al Muwallad 12, Al Mogahwi 67)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 13,792. **Ref:** Al Qaysi (Irq)
Lebanon: Khalil - A Michel, Jounaidi, Oumari, Hamam, F Michel, Faour (Ataya 73), El Zein, M Haidar (Tahan 86), El Helwe, Maatouk (N Matar 76).
Saudi Arabia: Al Owais - Al Burayk, Al Fatil, Al Bulaihi, Al Shamrani, Otayf (Ghaleb 84), Bahebri, Al Bishi (Ghareeb 79), Al Mogahwi, Al Dawsari, Al Muwallad (Al Shehri 73).

Jan13 - Al Ain
North Korea 0
Qatar 6 (Almoez Ali 9, 11, 55, 60, Khoukhi 43, A Hassan 68)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 452. **Ref:** Perera (Sri)
North Korea: Ri Myong-guk - Ri Il-jin, Kim Kyong-hun, Kim Song-gi (Ri Thong-il 77), Kim Chol-bom, Kim Yong-il (Ri Hyok-chol 43), Sim Hyon-jin, Ri Un-chol, Rim Kwang-hyok (Ri Yong-jik 63), Pak Kwang-ryong, Jong Il-gwan. *Sent off: Jong Il-gwan 90.*
Qatar: Al Sheeb - Pedro Miguel (Ismail 74), Al Rawi, Salman, A Hassan (Ali Afif 80), Madibo (Fathi 71), Hatem, Al Haidos, Khoukhi, Akram Afif, Almoez Ali.

Jan17 - Abu Dhabi
Saudi Arabia 0
Qatar 2 (Almoez Ali 45+1, 80)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 16,067. **Ref:** Kim Dong-jin (SKo)
Saudi Arabia: Al Owais - Al Burayk, Al Bulaihi, Al Fatil, Al Shamrani, Otayf (Al Mousa 78), Al Shehri, Bahebri, Al Mogahwi, Al Muwallad (Al Khulaif 75), Ghareeb (Al Saiari 61).
Qatar: Al Sheeb - Pedro Miguel, Al Rawi, Salman, A Hassan, Hatem, Madibo (Al Hajri 69), Khoukhi, Al Haidos (Boudiaf 73), Almoez Ali (Alaaeldin 83), Akram Afif.

Jan17 - Sharjah
Lebanon 4 (F Michel 27, El Helwe 65, 90+8, Maatouk pen 80)
North Korea 1 (Pak Kwang-ryong 9)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 4,332. **Ref:** Beath (Aus)
Lebanon: Khalil - Ismail, Mansour (Chaito 81), Oumari, F Michel, Ayass (A Haidar 77), N Matar (Ataya 53), El Helwe, M Haidar, A Michel, Maatouk.
North Korea: Ri Myong-guk - Kim Chol-bom, Jang Kuk-chol, An Song-il, Sim Hyon-jin, Kim Kyong-hun (Kang Kuk-chol 29; Choe Song-hyok 75), Ri Un-chol, Ri Yong-jik, Kim Yong-il, Han Kwang-song, Pak Kwang-ryong (Ri Hyok-chol 61).

ASIAN CUP: FINALS – GROUP E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Qatar (Q)	3	3	0	0	10	0	9
Saudi Arabia (Q)	3	2	0	1	6	2	6
Lebanon	3	1	0	2	4	5	3
North Korea	3	0	0	3	1	14	0

Group F

Jan 9 - Abu Dhabi
Japan 3 (Osako 56, 60, Doan 71)
Turkmenistan 2 (Amanow 26, Atayew pen 79)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 5,725. **Ref:** Faghani (Irn)
Japan: Gonda - Sakai, Tomiyasu, Yoshida, Makino, Nagatomo, Haraguchi, Shibasaki, Doan, Minamino (Kitagawa 73), Osako.
Turkmenistan: Orazmuhamedow - Atayew, Saparow, Annaorazow, Babajanow, Ylyasow, Batyrow, Amanow (Yagsyyew 69), Mingazow (Titow 85), Hojayew, Orazsahedow (Annadurdyyew 59).

Jan 9 - Sharjah
Uzbekistan 2 (Ahmedov 34, Shomurodov 85)
Oman 1 (Mohsin Al Ghassani 72)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 9,424. **Ref:** Ko (SKo)
Uzbekistan: Nesterov - Shorakhmedov, Krimets, Ismailov, Zoteev, Rashidov (Khamdamov 59), Ahmedov, Shukurov, Sidikov, Masharipov (Alibaev 79), Bikmaev (Shomurodov 83). *Sent off: Krimets 90+2.*
Oman: F Al Rushaidi - Al Musalami, Al Busaidi, Al Braiki, Al Mukhaini, Al Saadi, Mubarak, Al Khaldi (Al Yahyaei 86), Al Hajri (Mohsin Al Ghassani 67), Al Yahmadi (Mohammed Al Ghassani 87), R Saleh.

Jan13 - Abu Dhabi
Oman 0
Japan 1 (Haraguchi pen 28)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 12,110. **Ref:** Yaacob (Mly)
Oman: F Al Rushaidi - Al Mukhaini, Al Braiki, Al Musalami, Al Busaidi, Al Saadi, Mubarak, Al Yahmadi, Mohsin Al Ghassani (Al Hajri 77), R Saleh, Al Yahyaei (Mohammed Al Ghassani 67).
Japan: Gonda - Sakai, Endo, Yoshida, Nagatomo, Tomiyasu, Shibasaki, Kitagawa (Muto 57), Doan (Ito 84), Haraguchi, Minamino.

Jan13 - Dubai
Turkmenistan 0
Uzbekistan 4 (Sidikov 17, Shomurodov 24, 42, Masharipov 40)
HT: 0-4. **Att:** 4,354. **Ref:** Al Jeneibi (UAE)
Turkmenistan: Orazmuhamedow - Annaorazow, Saparow, Babajanow, Ylyasow, Batyrow, Mingazow, Hojayew, Atayew (Annayew 44), Amanow (Titow 65), Orazsahedow (Annadurdyyew 46).
Uzbekistan: Nesterov - Shorakhmedov (Khashimov 46), Tukhtakhodjaev, Ismailov, Zoteev, Ahmedov (Musaev 76), Shukurov, Khamdamov, Sidikov (Alibaev 68), Masharipov, Shomurodov.

Jan17 - Abu Dhabi
Oman 3 (Mubarak 20, Mohsin Al Ghassani 84, Al Musalami 90+3)
Turkmenistan 1 (Annadurdyyew 41)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 8,338. **Ref:** Shukralla (Bhn)
Oman: F Al Rushaidi - Al Mukhaini, Al Braiki (Mohammed Al Ghassani 74), Al Musalami, Al Busaidi, Al Saadi, Mubarak, Al Hosni (Al Yahmadi 61), Al Hajri (Al Yahyaei 86), R Saleh, Mohsin Al Ghassani.
Turkmenistan: Orazmuhamedow - Annagulyyew, Saparow, Ylyasow, Annaorazow, Geldiyew, Hojayew (Atayew 46), Batyrow, Mingazow (Amanow 68), Annadurdyyew (Titow 83), Yagsyyew.

Jan17 - Al Ain
Japan 2 (Muto 43, Shiotani 58)
Uzbekistan 1 (Shomurodov 40)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 7,005. **Ref:** Mohammed (UAE)
Japan: Schmidt - Miura, Sasaki, Makino, Muroya, Aoyama, Shiotani, Ito, Inui (Haraguchi 81), Muto (Endo 85), Kitagawa (Tomiyasu 90+3).
Uzbekistan: Nesterov - Tukhtakhodjaev, Khashimov, Sayfiev, Krimets, Alibaev, Khamdamov (Turgunbaev 65), Musaev (Rashidov 76), Shukurov, Sidikov, Shomurodov (Bikmaev 70).

ASIAN CUP: FINALS – GROUP F

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Japan (Q)	3	3	0	0	6	3	9
Uzbekistan (Q)	3	2	0	1	7	3	6
Oman (Q)	3	1	0	2	4	4	3
Turkmenistan	3	0	0	3	3	10	0

● *The top 2 in each group and the 4 3rd-placed countries with the best record qualified for the round of16*

Round of 16

Jan 20 - Dubai
Jordan 1 (Abdel-Rahman 39)
Vietnam 1 (Nguyen Cong Phuong 51)
Aet. **HT:** 1-0. **90mins:** 1-1. **Att:** 14,205.
Ref: Faghani (Irn)
Vietnam 4-2 on pens
Jordan: Shafi - Shelbaieh, Khattab, Al Ajalin, Bani Yaseen, Murjan (Faisal 71), Abdel-Rahman, Al Taamari (Haddad 98), Al Rawashdeh (Samir 105+2), Bani Attiah, Al Bakhit (Ersan 98).
Vietnam: Dang Van Lam - Nguyen Trong Hoang (Tran Minh Vuong 117), Do Duy Manh, Que Ngoc Hai, Bui Tien Dung, Doan Van Hau, Nguyen Quang Hai, Nguyen Huy Hung (Nguyen Van Toan 96), Do Hung Dung, Phan Van Duc (Luong Xuan Truong 105+1), Nguyen Cong Phuong (Nguyen Tien Linh 77).

Jan 20 - Al Ain
Thailand 1 (Supachai 31)
China 2 (Xiao Zhi 67, Gao Lin pen 71)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 8,026. **Ref:** Mohammed (UAE)
Thailand: Siwarak - Theerathon, Chalermpong, Pansa, Mika, Chanathip, Thitipan, Tanaboon (Pokklaw 81), Supachai (Chananan 63), Teerasil, Tristan.
China: Yan Junling - Liu Yang (Xiao Zhi 64), Shi Ke, Zhang Linpeng, Feng Xiaoting, Hao Junmin, Wu Xi (Zhao Xuri 82), Zheng Zhi, Gao Lin, Wu Lei, Yu Dabao (Jin Jingdao 64).

Jan 20 - Abu Dhabi
Iran 2 (Jahanbakhsh 32, Dejagah pen 41)
Oman 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 31,945. **Ref:** Ramos (Mex)
Iran: Beiranvand - Rezaeian, Pouraliganji, Hosseini, Mohammadi, Taremi, Dejagah (Ghoddos 78), Ebrahimi, Jahanbakhsh (Cheshmi 69), Amiri, Azmoun (Shojaei 88).
Oman: F Al Rushaidi - Al Mukhaini, Al Braiki, Al Musalami, Al Busaidi, Al Yahyaei (Al Hajri 46), Mubarak (Al Khaldi 81), Al Saadi, Al Yahmadi, Mohsin Al Ghassani (Mohammed Al Ghassani 88), R Saleh.

Jan 21 - Sharjah
Japan 1 (Tomiyasu 20)
Saudi Arabia 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 6,832. **Ref:** Irmatov (Uzb)
Japan: Gonda - Sakai, Tomiyasu, Yoshida, Nagatomo, Endo, Shibasaki, Doan (Shiotani 89), Minamino (Ito 77), Haraguchi, Muto (Kitagawa 90+2).
Saudi Arabia: Al Owais - Al Burayk, Al Fatil, Al Bulaihi, Al Shahrani, Otayf (Al Saiari 78), Bahebri (Ghareeb 88), Al Bishi (Al Shehri 56), Al Mogahwi, Al Dawsari, Al Muwallad.

Jan 21 - Al Ain
Australia 0
Uzbekistan 0
Aet. **Att:** 6,809. **Ref:** Al Jassim (Qat)
Australia 4-2 on pens
Australia: Ryan - Grant, Degenek, Milligan, Behich, Sainsbury, Irvine, Mabil (Leckie 68), Rogic (Luongo 111), Ikonomidis (Kruse 96), Maclaren (Giannou 75).
Uzbekistan: Nesterov - Khashimov, Tukhtakhodjaev, Ismailov, Zoteev (Sayfiev 105), Khamdamov (Turgunbaev 107), Shukurov, Sidikov (Alibaev 73), Masharipov, Shomurodov (Bikmaev 104), Ahmedov.

Jan 21 - Abu Dhabi
United Arab Emirates 3 (Esmaeel 14, Mabkhout 64, Khalil pen 103)
Kyrgyzstan 2 (Murzaev 26, Rustamov 90+1)
Aet. **HT:** 1-1. **90mins:** 2-2. **Att:** 17,784.
Ref: Fu (Chn)
UAE: Eisa - Al Ahbabi, Khalifa Mubarak (Juma 30), I Ahmed, Saleh, Esmaeel, Salmeen, A Abdulrahman (Khalil 98), Matar (M Ahmed 82), Khalfan Mubarak (I Al Hammadi 62), Mabkhout.
Kyrgyzstan: Kadyrbekov - Zhyrgalbek Uulu, Iusupov, Kozubaev, Kichin, Israilov (Rustamov 76), Bernhardt (Sydykov 64), Lux, Musabekov (Zemlianukhin 80), Sagynbaev, Murzaev (Duyshobekov 102).

Jan 22 - Dubai
South Korea 2 (Hwang Hee-chan 43, Kim Jin-su 105+2)
Bahrain 1 (Al Romaihi 77)
Aet. **HT:** 1-0. **90mins:** 1-1. **Att:** 7,658.
Ref: Sato (Jap)
South Korea: Kim Seung-gyu - Lee Yong, Kim Min-jae, Kim Young-gwon, Hong Chul (Kim Jin-su 96), Hwang In-beom (Lee Seung-woo 89), Jung Woo-young, Hwang Hee-chan (Ji Dong-won 80), Son Heung-min, Lee Chung-yong (Ju Se-jong 68), Hwang Ui-jo.
Bahrain: Alawi (Fardan 102) - Issa (Helal 109), Al Shamsan, Al Hayam, Marhoon (Al Humaidan 71), Al Aswad, Al Safi, Saeed, Rashid, Madan (Al Husaini 57), Al Romaihi.

Jan 22 - Abu Dhabi
Qatar 1 (Al Rawi 62)
Iraq 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 14,701. **Ref:** Bin Jahari (Sin)
Qatar: Al Sheeb - Pedro Miguel, Al Rawi, Salman, A Hassan, Hatem, Madibo, Khoukhi, Al Haidos (Boudiaf 90), Almoez Ali, Akram Afif.
Iraq: Hassan - Ibrahim, Adnan, Mhawi (Sulaka 71), Faez, Resan, Tariq (Husni 36; Dawood 66), Hadi, Attwan, H Ali, M Ali.

Quarter-finals

Jan 24 - Dubai
Vietnam 0
Japan 1 (Doan pen 57)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 8,954. **Ref:** Mohammed (UAE)
Vietnam: Dang Van Lam - Nguyen Trong Hoang (Nguyen Phong Hong Duy 63), Nguyen Quang Hai, Que Ngoc Hai, Do Duy Manh, Bui Tien Dung, Nguyen Cong Phuong, Do Hung Dung, Doan Van Hau, Nguyen Huy Hung (Nguyen Van Toan 54), Phan Van Duc (Luong Xuan Truong 75).
Japan: Gonda - Sakai, Tomiyasu, Yoshida, Nagatomo, Doan, Shibasaki, Endo, Haraguchi (Inui 79), Minamino (Shiotani 89), Kitagawa (Osako 72).

Jan 24 - Abu Dhabi
China 0
Iran 3 (Taremi 18, Azmoun 31, Ansarifard 90+1)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 19,578. **Ref:** Al Jassim (Qat)
China: Yan Junling - Feng Xiaoting (Xiao Zhi 28), Liu Yiming, Shi Ke, Zhang Chengdong, Wu Xi (Zhao Xuri 25), Zheng Zhi, Liu Yang, Wu Lei (Yu Dabao 75), Gao Lin, Hao Junmin.
Iran: Beiranvand - Rezaeian, Pouraliganji, Kanaani, Mohammadi, Jahanbakhsh (Ghoddos 68), Ebrahimi, Hajsafi, Dejagah (Cheshmi 76), Taremi, Azmoun (Ansarifard 86).

Jan 25 - Abu Dhabi
South Korea 0
Qatar 1 (Hatem 78)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 13,791. **Ref:** Irmatov (Uzb)
South Korea: Kim Seung-gyu - Lee Yong, Kim Min-jae, Kim Young-gwon, Kim Jin-su, Hwang In-beom (Koo Ja-cheol 74), Jung Woo-young, Ju Se-jong (Ji Dong-won 82), Son Heung-min, Lee Chung-yong (Lee Seung-woo 84), Hwang Ui-jo.
Qatar: Al Sheeb - Pedro Miguel, Al Rawi, Salman, Al Hajri, Khoukhi, Abdulkarim Al Ali, Al Haidos (Boudiaf 90), Hatem, Akram Afif, Almoez Ali (Alaaeldin 90+5).

Jan 25 - Al Ain
United Arab Emirates 1 (Mabkhout 68)
Australia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 25,053. **Ref:** Sato (Jap)
UAE: Eisa - M Ahmed (K Al Hammadi 18), Juma, I Ahmed, Abbas, Salmeen, Hassan, Al Ahbabi, Matar (M Abdulrahman 52), I Al Hammadi (Rashid 88), Mabkhout.
Australia: Ryan - Grant, Sainsbury, Degenek, Behich, Kruse (Mabil 73), Irvine, Milligan, Ikonomidis, Giannou (Nabbout 80), Maclaren (Leckie 60).

Semi-finals

Jan 28 - Al Ain
Iran 0
Japan 3 (Osako 56, pen 67, Haraguchi 90+1)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 23,262. **Ref:** Beath (Aus)
Iran: Beiranvand - Rezaeian, Pouraliganji, Kanaani, Mohammadi, Ebrahimi, Hajsafi, Jahanbakhsh (Ghoddos 71), Dejagah (Torabi 71), Amiri (Ansarifard 58), Azmoun.
Japan: Gonda - Sakai (Muroya 73), Tomiyasu, Yoshida, Nagatomo, Doan (Ito 89), Shibasaki, Endo (Shiotani 60), Haraguchi, Osako, Minamino.

Jan 29 - Abu Dhabi
Qatar 4 (Khoukhi 22, Almoez Ali 37, Al Haidos 80, Ismail 90+3)
United Arab Emirates 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 38,646. **Ref:** Ramos (Mex)
Qatar: Al Sheeb - Pedro Miguel (Al Muhaza 90+4), Madibo, Khoukhi, Salman, A Hassan, Al Haidos, Al Hajri, Boudiaf, Akram Afif (Ismail 90+2), Almoez Ali (Alaaeldin 86).
UAE: Eisa - Esmaeel, I Ahmed, Juma, Abbas, Salmeen, A Abdulrahman (Matar 46), Al Ahbabi, Rashid (M Abdulrahman 70), I Al Hammadi (Khalil 51), Mabkhout.
Sent off: I Ahmed 90+1.

Final
Feb1 - Abu Dhabi
Japan 1 (Minamino 69)
Qatar 3 (Almoez Ali 12, Hatem 27, Akram Afif pen 83)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 36,776. **Ref:** Irmatov (Uzb)
Japan: Gonda - Sakai, Tomiyasu, Yoshida, Nagatomo, Haraguchi (Muto 62), Shibasaki, Shiotani (Ito 84), Doan, Osako, Minamino (Inui 89).
Qatar: Al Sheeb - Pedro Miguel, Al Rawi, Khoukhi (Al Hajri 61), Salman, A Hassan, Al Haidos (Boudiaf 74), Hatem, Madibo, Akram Afif, Almoez Ali (Alaaeldin 90+6).

FRIENDLIES

Tuesday, January 15
Jan15 - Doha, Qatar
Estonia 0
Iceland 0
Ref: Al Marri (Qat)
Estonia: Meerits - Teniste (Elhi 62), Ojamaa, Vihmann, Tamm (Purg 46), Dmitrijev (Peetson 76), Kuusk, Vassiljev (Poom 46), Puri, Koskor (Anier 46), Roosnupp (Liivak 46).
Iceland: I Jonsson (Einarsson 80) - Saevarsson, Andresson, Finnsson, Hermannsson, Thrandarson (Hauksson 69), Olafsson, Hilmar Halldorsson (Fridjonsson 46), Thorarinsson (Smarason 46), Thorsteinsson (Willumsson 69), Karlsson (Bjarnason 46).

Sunday, January 27
Jan 27 - Glendale
United States 3 (Mihailovic 40, Zimmerman 80, Ramirez 89)
Panama 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 9,040. **Ref:** Escobedo (Mex)
United States: Steffen (Johnson 74) - Lima, Zimmerman, Long, Lovitz, Bradley (Trapp 84), Roldan, Mihailovic (Lletget 62), Baird (Arriola 75), Zardes (Ramirez 84), Ebobisse (Lewis 66).
Panama: Roberts - Benitez (Anderson 46), Escobar, Gondola, Palacios, Canate (Orelien 65), Carrasquilla (Harvey 46), Walker (Botello 71), Browne (Samms 46), Sinclair, Arroyo.

Saturday, February 2
Feb 2 - SanJose
United States 2 (Lletget 80, Arriola 88)
Costa Rica 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 13,656. **Ref:** Hernandez (Mex)
United States: Steffen - Lima, Zimmerman, Long, Lovitz, Trapp, Roldan, Mihailovic (Lletget 63), Baird (Lewis 70), Zardes (Ramirez 78), Arriola.
Costa Rica: Alvarado - Francis, Calvo, Fuller, Arboine (Cubero 86), Cruz, Loria (Mora 77), Araya (Scott 58), Guzman (Monge 81), Alfaro (Villalobos 56), Ortiz (McDonald 63).

2019 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS

Remaining fixtures (to be played March 22-24) are listed under the respective tables

Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Senegal (QF)	5	4	1	0	10	2	13
Madag'car (QF)	5	3	1	1	8	6	10
Equat Guinea	5	1	0	4	1	6	3
Sudan	5	1	0	4	4	9	3

Senegal v Madagascar; Sudan v Equatorial Guinea

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Morocco (QF)	5	3	1	1	8	3	10
Cameroon	5	2	2	1	3	3	8
Comoros	5	1	2	2	5	6	5
Malawi	5	1	1	3	2	6	4

Cameroon v Comoros; Malawi v Morocco

Group C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mali (QF)	5	3	2	0	7	2	11
Burundi	5	2	3	0	10	4	9
Gabon	5	2	1	2	6	4	7
South Sudan	5	0	0	5	2	15	0

Burundi v Gabon; Mali v South Sudan

Group D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Algeria (QF)	5	3	1	1	8	3	10
Benin	5	2	1	2	3	5	7
Togo	5	1	2	2	3	6	5
Gambia	5	1	2	2	5	5	5

Algeria v Gambia; Benin v Togo

Group E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nigeria (QF)	5	3	1	1	11	5	10
South Africa	5	2	3	0	9	1	9
Libya	5	2	1	2	15	9	7
Seychelles	5	0	1	4	2	22	1

Libya v South Africa; Nigeria v Seychelles

Group F

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kenya (QF)	3	2	1	0	4	0	7
Ghana (QF)	3	2	0	1	7	1	6
Ethiopia	4	0	1	3	0	10	1

Ghana v Kenya
● *Sierra Leone expelled from tournament after FIFA suspended the FA; results annulled*

Group G

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zimbabwe	5	2	2	1	7	4	8
Liberia	5	2	1	2	5	8	7
DR Congo	5	1	3	1	7	6	6
Congo	5	1	2	2	7	8	5

DR Congo v Liberia; Zimbabwe v Congo

Group H

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guinea (QF)	5	3	2	0	8	4	11
Ivory C'st (QF)	5	2	2	1	9	5	8
Cent Af Rep	5	1	2	2	4	8	5
Rwanda	5	0	2	3	5	9	2

Central African Republic v Guinea; Ivory Coast v Rwanda

Group I

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mauritania (QF)	5	4	0	1	7	5	12
Angola	5	3	0	2	8	6	9
Burkina Faso	5	2	1	2	7	5	7
Botswana	5	0	1	4	1	7	1

Botswana v Angola; Burkina Faso v Mauritania

Group J

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tunisia (QF)	5	4	0	1	8	4	12
Egypt (QF)	5	4	0	1	15	4	12
Niger	5	1	1	3	3	10	4
Eswatini	5	0	1	4	2	10	1

Niger v Egypt; Tunisia v Eswatini (Swaziland)

Group K

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guinea-Bissau	5	2	2	1	6	5	8
Namibia	5	2	2	1	4	3	8
Mozambique	5	2	1	2	5	5	7
Zambia	5	1	1	3	4	6	4

Guinea-Bissau v Mozambique; Zambia v Namibia

Group L

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Uganda (QF)	5	4	1	0	7	0	13
Lesotho	5	1	2	2	3	7	5
Tanzania	5	1	2	2	3	5	5
Cape Verde Is	5	1	1	3	4	5	4

Cape Verde Islands v Lesotho; Tanzania v Uganda

● *The top 2 in each of the12 groups will qualify for the 24-team finals, to be staged by Egypt*

Club football

AFRICA

CONFEDERATION CUP

Play-off round
1st legs - Jan11-14; 2nd legs - Jan19/20
African Stars (Nam) v Raja Casablanca (Mor) 1-1, 0-1 (agg 1-2); Al Ahly Benghazi (Lby) v Hussein Dey (Alg) 1-0, 1-3 (agg 2-3); Al Hilal Omdurman (Sud) v Mukura Victory (Rwa) 3-0, 0-1 (agg 3-1); Al Nasr (Lby) v Salitas (BuF) 1-0, 1-3 (agg 2-3); AS Otoho (Con) v KCCA (Uga) 3-0, 0-2 (agg 3-2); Bantu (Les) v Enugu Rangers (Nga) 1-2, 1-2 (agg 2-4); Coton Sport (Cam) v Asante Kotoko (Gha) 2-3, 1-2 (agg 3-5); Gor Mahia (Ken) v New Star (Cam) 2-1, 0-0 (agg 2-1); Ittihad Tanger (Mor) v Zamalek (Egy) 0-0, 1-3 (agg 1-3); Jaraaf (Sen) v RS Berkane (Mor) 2-0, 1-5 (agg 3-5); Jimma Aba Jifar (Eth) v Hassania Agadir (Mor) 0-1, 0-4 (agg 0-5); Nkana (Zam) v San Pedro (IvC) 3-0, 0-0 (agg 3-0); Stade Malien (Mli) v Petro Atletico (Ang) 1-1, 1-2 (agg 2-3); Vipers (Uga) v CS Sfaxien (Tun) 0-0, 0-3 (agg 0-3); Zesco United (Zam) v Kaizer Chiefs (SAf) 3-1, 2-1 (agg 5-2)

● *The winning teams have qualified for the group stage*

Bye to group stage: *Etoile Sahel (Tun)*

OCEANIA

OFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Qualifying stage
Played in Matavera, Cook Islands
Jan 26: Pago Youth (AmS) 1 Lotoha'apai United (Ton) 5; Tupapa Maraerenga (Coo) 4 Kiwi (Soa) 1.
Jan 29: Kiwi 4 Pago Youth 3; Tupapa Maraerenga 4 Lotoha'apai United 1.
Feb 1: Lotoha'apai United 1 Kiwi 9; Tupapa Maraerenga 2 Pago Youth 1.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – QUAL STAGE – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tupapa M'a (Q)	3	3	0	0	10	3	9
Kiwi (Q)	3	2	0	1	14	8	6
Lotoha'apai	3	1	0	2	7	14	3
Pago Youth	3	0	0	3	5	11	0

● *The top 2 have qualified for the main group stage*

TONGA

2018 Championship Final
Nov 30: Lotoha'apai United 2 Veitongo 1.

ASIA

NEPAL

2018-19 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Manang M'i (C)	13	12	0	1	23	7	36
Sankata	13	9	1	3	21	15	28
Three Star	13	8	2	3	22	11	26
Nepal Army	13	7	4	2	21	8	25
Armed Police	13	7	2	4	20	14	23
Nepal Police	13	5	4	4	19	12	19
Him'an Sherpa	13	5	2	6	15	15	17
Chyasal Youth	13	4	4	5	17	15	16
Saraswoti Yth	13	4	2	7	12	20	14
Jawalakhel Yth	13	3	4	6	10	15	13
Friends	13	3	3	7	13	25	12
Brigade Boys	13	2	4	7	12	21	10
Machhindra	13	1	4	8	11	24	7
New Road	13	1	4	8	12	26	7

KEY TO TABLES
(C) = champions
(Q) = qualified for next stage
(QF) = qualified for finals

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HOLLAND: EREDIVISIE 2018-19

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1	Indy **GROOTHUIZEN**	(22) 22.07.96
18	Mike **HAVEKOTTE**	(23) 12.09.95
22	Robert **ZWINKELS**	(35) 04.05.83

DEFENDERS

4	Tom **BEUGELSDIJK**	(28) 07.08.90
27	Trevor **DAVID**	(22) 28.01.97
5	Wilfried **KANON** (IvC)	(25) 06.07.93
20	Nick **KUIPERS**	(26) 08.10.92
8	Aaron **MEIJERS**	(31) 28.10.87
19	Shaquille **PINAS**	(20) 19.03.98
25	Robin **POLLEY**	(20) 28.12.98
3	Giovanni **TROUPEE**	(20) 20.03.98

MIDFIELDERS

17	Danny **BAKKER**	(24) 16.01.95
23	Abdenasser **EL KHAYATI**	(30) 07.02.89
30	Erik **FALKENBURG**	(30) 05.05.88
11	John **GOOSSENS**	(30) 25.07.88
6	Donny **GORTER**	(30) 15.06.88
10	Lex **IMMERS**	(32) 08.06.86
2	Dion **MALONE**	(30) 13.02.89
28	Mats **VAN KINS**	(20) 17.12.98

FORWARDS

7	Sheraldo **BECKER**	(24) 09.02.95
12	Yahya **BOUSSAKOU**	(18) 04.03.00
26	Thijmen **GOPPEL**	(22) 16.02.97
77	Elson **HOOI** (Cur)	(27) 01.10.91
35	Ricardo **KISHNA**	(24) 04.01.95
33	Melvyn **LORENZEN** (Uga)	(24) 26.11.94
9	Tomas **NECID** (CzR)	(29) 13.08.89
97	Zhang **YUNING** (Chn)	(22) 05.01.97

COACH

Alfons **GROENENDIJK**	(54) 17.05.64

AJAX

GOALKEEPERS

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33	Dominik **KOTARSKI** (Cro)	(19) 10.02.00
26	Kostas **LAMPROU** (Gre)	(27) 18.09.91
24	Andre **ONANA** (Cam)	(22) 02.04.96
28	Bruno **VARELA** (Por)	(24) 04.11.94

DEFENDERS

35	Mitchell **BAKKER**	(18) 20.06.00
17	Daley **BLIND**	(28) 09.03.90
4	Matthijs **DE LIGT**	(19) 12.08.99
2	Rasmus **KRISTENSEN** (Den)	(21) 11.07.97
16	Lisandro **MAGALLAN** (Arg)	(25) 27.09.93
27	Perr **SCHUURS**	(19) 26.11.99
8	Daley **SINKGRAVEN**	(23) 04.07.95
31	Nicolas **TAGLIAFICO** (Arg)	(26) 31.08.92
3	Joel **VELTMAN**	(27) 15.01.92

MIDFIELDERS

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30	Dani **DE WIT**	(21) 28.01.98
15	Carel **EITING**	(21) 11.02.98
40	Jurgen **EKKELENKAMP**	(18) 05.04.00
38	Ryan **GRAVENBERCH**	(16) 16.05.02
19	Zakaria **LABYAD** (Mor)	(25) 09.03.93
37	Noa **LANG**	(19) 17.06.99
12	Noussair **MAZRAOUI** (Mor)	(21) 14.11.97
20	Lasse **SCHONE** (Den)	(32) 27.05.86
6	Donny **VAN DE BEEK**	(21) 18.04.97
22	Hakim **ZIYECH** (Mor)	(25) 19.03.93

FORWARDS

18	Hassane **BANDE** (BuF)	(20) 30.10.98
32	Vaclav **CERNY** (CzR)	(21) 17.10.97
47	**DANILO** (Bra)	(19) 07.04.99
25	Kasper **DOLBERG** (Den)	(21) 06.10.97
9	Klaas-Jan **HUNTELAAR**	(35) 12.08.83
7	David **NERES** (Bra)	(21) 03.03.97
10	Ducan **TADIC** (Ser)	(30) 20.11.88

COACH

Erik **TEN HAG**	(49) 02.02.70

Return...Daley Blind

AZ

GOALKEEPERS

1	Marco **BIZOT**	(27) 10.03.91
16	Rody **DE BOER**	(21) 22.08.97
45	Joey **ROGGEVEEN**	(20) 20.03.98
25	Jasper **SCHENDELAAR**	(18) 02.09.00
22	Piet **VELTHUIZEN**	(32) 03.11.86

DEFENDERS

23	Leon **BERGSMA**	(22) 25.01.97
12	Pantelis **HATZIDIAKOS** (Gre)	(22) 18.01.97
19	Joris **KRAMER**	(22) 02.08.96
5	Thomas **OUWEJAN**	(22) 24.06.96
2	Jonas **SVENSSON** (Nor)	(25) 06.03.93
34	Ricardo **VAN RHIJN**	(27) 13.06.91
4	Ron **VLAAR**	(34) 16.02.85
3	Henri **WEIGELT** (Ger)	(21) 17.01.98
15	Owen **WIJNDAL**	(19) 28.11.99
30	Stijn **WUYTENS** (Blg)	(29) 08.10.89

MIDFIELDERS

17	Jeremy **HELMER**	(21) 03.07.97
44	Kenzo **GOUDMIJN**	(17) 18.12.01
29	Mees **HOEDEMAKERS**	(21) 18.02.98
8	Teun **KOOPMEINERS**	(20) 28.02.98
26	Adam **MAHER**	(25) 20.07.93
6	Fredrik **MIDTSJO** (Nor)	(25) 11.08.93
24	Tijjani **REIJNDERS**	(20) 19.07.98
20	Mats **SEUNTJENS**	(26) 17.04.92
10	Guus **TIL**	(21) 22.12.97
18	Marko **VEJINOVIC**	(29) 03.02.90

FORWARDS

21	Myron **BOADU**	(18) 14.01.01
28	Albert **GUDMUNDSSON** (Ice)	(21) 15.06.97
11	Oussama **IDRISSI** (Mor)	(22) 26.02.96
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7	Calvin **STENGS**	(20) 18.12.98

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DE GRAAFSCHAP

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1	Hidde **JURJUS**	(25) 09.02.94
13	Jordy **RONDEEL**	(24) 04.08.94
35	Nick **VAN DEN DAM**	(19) 12.03.99

DEFENDERS

12	Myenty **ABENA** (Sur)	(24) 12.12.94
32	Mart **JANSSEN**	(20) 23.09.98
15	Ruben **LIGEON**	(26) 24.05.92
4	Lars **NIEUWPOORT**	(24) 29.11.94
23	Sven **NIEUWPOORT**	(25) 13.04.93
44	Leeroy **OWUSU**	(22) 13.08.96
2	Bart **STRAALMAN**	(22) 28.08.96
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3	Ted **VAN DE PAVERT**	(27) 06.01.92
42	Reyer **VAN DORN**	(20) 02.07.98
37	Jurre **VREMAN**	(21) 20.02.98

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14	Liban **ABDULAHI**	(23) 02.11.95
18	Erik **BAKKER**	(28) 21.03.90
20	Youssef **EL JEBLI**	(26) 27.12.92
36	Koen **HUNTELAAR**	(20) 08.07.98
6	Robert **KLAASEN**	(25) 06.09.93
21	Azor **MATUSIWA**	(20) 28.04.98
10	Stef **NIJLAND**	(30) 10.08.88
28	Frank **OLIJVE**	(29) 07.03.89
43	Jonathan **VERGARA BERRIO**	(20) 07.01.99
8	Javier **VET**	(25) 09.09.93

FORWARDS

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25	Delano **BURGZORG**	(20) 07.11.98
47	Mo **HAMDAOUI**	(25) 10.06.93
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22	Fabian **SERRARENS**	(27) 09.02.91
19	Jordy **THOMASSEN**	(25) 15.04.93
11	Daryl **VAN MIEGHEM**	(29) 05.12.89

COACH

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EMMEN

GOALKEEPERS

12	Kjell **SCHERPEN**	(19) 23.01.00
26	Dennis **TELGENKAMP**	(31) 09.05.87
1	Peter **VAN DER VLAG**	(41) 05.12.77

DEFENDERS

4	Nick **BAKKER**	(26) 21.07.92
23	Glenn **BIJL**	(23) 13.07.95
14	Jason **BOURDOUXHE** (Blg)	(27) 11.04.91
24	Daniel **CAMARA BOS**	(19) 24.05.99
22	Caner **CAVLAN**	(27) 05.02.92
2	Stef **GRONSVELD**	(23) 11.01.96
5	Gersom **KLOK**	(28) 07.10.90
33	Nick **KUIPERS**	(26) 08.10.92
44	Andrej **LUKIC** (Cro)	(24) 02.04.94
29	Nico **NEIDHART** (Ger)	(24) 27.09.94
3	Tim **SIEKMAN**	(28) 25.05.90
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19	Stephen **WARMOLTS**	(24) 10.04.94

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8	Hilal **BEN MOUSSA**	(26) 22.05.92
18	Emil **BIJLSMA**	(20) 06.09.98
30	Henk **BOS**	(26) 12.11.92
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28	Rob **DEIMAN**	(19) 10.06.99
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7	Wouter **MARINUS**	(24) 18.02.95
11	Reuven **NIEMEIJER**	(23) 27.03.95

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99	Sven **BRAKEN**	(25) 12.06.93
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16	Kasper **OLDENBURGER**	(23) 12.02.96
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17	Luciano **SLAGVEER**	(25) 05.10.93

COACH

Dick **LUKKIEN**	(46) 28.03.72

EXCELSIOR

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1	Alessandro **DAMEN**	(28) 17.05.90
23	Maarten **DE FOCKERT**	(24) 20.02.95
36	Tuana **OZDEMIR**	(17) 15.06.01
20	Sonny **STEVENS**	(26) 22.06.92
-	Nelson **KONINGS**	(18) 30.11.00

DEFENDERS

28	Lorenzo **BURNET**	(28) 11.01.91
2	Siebe **HOREMANS** (Blg)	(20) 02.06.98
15	Jurgen **MATTHEIJ**	(25) 01.04.93
3	Herve **MATTHYS** (Blg)	(23) 19.01.96
4	Thomas **OUDE KOTTE**	(22) 20.03.96
17	Desevio **PAYNE** (USA)	(23) 30.11.95
5	Robin **VAN DER MEER**	(24) 21.02.95

MIDFIELDERS

19	Mikael **ANDERSON** (Ice)	(20) 01.07.98
10	Luigi **BRUINS**	(31) 09.03.87
18	Marcus **EDWARDS** (Eng)	(20) 03.12.98
35	Redouan **EL HANKOURI** (Mor)	(18) 03.02.01
30	Jaap **FISCHER**	(19) 25.01.00
22	Jeffry **FORTES** (CV)	(29) 22.03.89
7	Anouar **HADOUIR**	(36) 14.09.82
21	Dogucan **HASPOLAT**	(19) 11.02.00
8	Ryan **KOOLWIJK**	(33) 08.08.85
14	Ali **MESSAOUD** (Mor)	(27) 13.04.91
6	Jerdy **SCHOUTEN**	(22) 12.01.97

FORWARDS

-	Jinty **CAENEPEEL** (Blg)	(22) 18.07.96
11	Dennis **ECKERT**	(22) 09.01.97
34	Mounir **EL HAMDAOUI** (Mor)	(34) 14.07.84
32	Carlito **FERMINA**	(19) 06.01.00
24	Denis **MAHMUDOV** (Mac)	(29) 06.11.89
9	Elias Mar **OMARSSON** (Ice)	(24) 18.01.95

COACH

Adrie **POLDERVAART**	(48) 20.12.70

FEYENOORD

GOALKEEPERS

22	Justin **BIJLOW**	(21) 22.01.98
13	Joris **DELLE** (Fra)	(28) 29.03.90
31	Elber **EVORA** (CVI)	(19) 02.12.99
30	Ramon **TEN HOVE**	(20) 03.03.98
1	Kenneth **VERMEER**	(33) 10.01.86

DEFENDERS

33	Eric **BOTTEGHIN** (Bra)	(31) 31.08.87
38	Lutsharel **GEERTRUIDA**	(18) 18.07.00
5	Ridgeciano **HAPS**	(25) 12.06.93
15	Tyrell **MALACIA**	(19) 17.08.99
24	Cuco **MARTINA** (Cur)	(29) 25.09.89
2	Bart **NIEUWKOOP**	(22) 07.03.96
4	Jerry **ST JUSTE**	(22) 19.10.96
6	Jan-Arie **VAN DER HEIJDEN**	(30) 03.03.88
3	Sven **VAN BEEK**	(24) 28.07.94
29	Calvin **VERDONK**	(21) 26.04.97

MIDFIELDERS

18	Yassin **AYOUB** (Mor)	(24) 06.03.94
35	Wouter **BURGER**	(18) 16.02.01
8	Jordy **CLASIE**	(27) 27.06.91
37	Achraf **EL BOUCHATAOUI**	(19) 12.01.00
23	Orkun **KOKCU**	(18) 29.12.00
10	Tonny **VILHENA**	(24) 03.01.95
26	Jordy **WEHRMANN**	(19) 25.03.99
28	Jens **TOORNSTRA**	(29) 04.04.89

FORWARDS

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9	Nicolai **JORGENSEN** (Den)	(28) 15.01.91
11	Sam **LARSSON** (Swe)	(25) 10.04.93
17	Luis **SINISTERRA** (Col)	(19) 17.06.99
36	Cheick **TOURE**	(18) 07.02.01
32	Robin **VAN PERSIE**	(35) 06.08.83
34	Dylan **VENTE**	(19) 09.05.99

COACH

Giovanni **VAN BRONCKHORST**	(44) 05.02.75

FORTUNA SITTARD

GOALKEEPERS

41	Tijn **BECKER**	(17) 02.12.01
28	Azbe **JUG** (Sln)	(26) 03.03.92
26	Rowen **KOOT**	(19) 20.07.99
1	Alexei **KOSELEV** (Mol)	(25) 19.11.93
21	Aykut **OZER** (Tur)	(26) 01.01.93

DEFENDERS

2	Alessandro **CIRANNI** (Blg)	(22) 28.06.96
13	Wessel **DAMMERS**	(23) 01.03.95
12	Mahamadou **DEMBELE** (Fra)	(19) 10.04.99
4	Clint **ESSERS**	(22) 21.01.97
15	Kai **HEERINGS**	(29) 12.01.90
5	**MICA** Pinto (Por)	(25) 04.06.93
17	Branislav **NINAJ** (Slk)	(24) 17.05.94
20	Marco **OSPITALIERI** (Blg)	(26) 06.04.92
14	Ruben **RAMIREZ** (Ven)	(23) 18.10.95
25	Anthony **SYHRE** (Ger)	(24) 18.03.95

MIDFIELDERS

3	Andrija **BALIC** (Cro)	(21) 11.08.97
24	Amadou **CISS** (Sen)	(19) 07.09.99
10	Mark **DIEMERS**	(25) 11.10.93
18	Ahmed **EL MESSAOUDI** (Blg)	(23) 03.08.95
11	Lars **HUTTEN**	(28) 18.03.90
32	George **MELLS** (Aus)	(21) 23.05.97
8	Jose **RODRIGUEZ** (Spa)	(24) 16.12.94
6	Jorrit **SMEETS**	(23) 25.03.95
22	Gavin **VLIJTER** (Sur)	(22) 12.02.97
33	Agim **ZEKA** (Alb)	(20) 06.09.98

FORWARDS

23	Djibril **DIANESSY** (Fra)	(22) 29.03.96
7	Aron **DOBOS** (Hun)	(18) 08.06.00
97	Lazaros **LAMPROU** (Gre)	(21) 19.12.97
19	Andrija **NOVAKOVICH** (USA)	(22) 21.09.96
9	Lisandro **SEMEDO** (Por)	(22) 12.03.96
16	Finn **STOKKERS**	(22) 18.04.96

COACH

Rene **EIJER**	(56) 01.01.63

GRONINGEN

GOALKEEPERS

16	Kevin **BEGOIS** (Blg)	(36) 13.05.82
45	Pelle **BOEVINK**	(21) 06.01.98
31	Jan **HOEKSTRA**	(20) 04.08.98
1	Sergio **PADT**	(28) 06.06.90

DEFENDERS

20	Amir **ABSALEM**	(21) 19.06.97
24	Julian **CHABOT** (Ger)	(21) 12.02.98
29	Tim **HANDWERKER** (Ger)	(20) 19.05.98
12	Lars **KRAMER**	(19) 11.07.99
5	Samir **MEMISEVIC** (Bos)	(25) 13.08.93
67	Tapmahoe **SOPACUA**	(18) 04.05.00
4	Mike **TE WIERIK**	(26) 08.06.92
42	Deyovaisio **ZEEFUIK**	(20) 11.03.98

MIDFIELDERS

8	Iliass **BEL HASSANI** (Mor)	(26) 16.09.92
15	Thomas **BRUNS**	(27) 07.01.92
7	Ritsu **DOAN** (Jap)	(20) 16.06.98
23	Ajdin **HRUSTIC** (Aus)	(22) 05.07.96
17	Ko **ITAKURA** (Jap)	(22) 27.01.97
6	Ludovit **REIS**	(18) 01.06.00
36	Tom **VAN DE LOOI**	(19) 02.07.99
58	Daniel **VAN KAAM**	(18) 23.06.00
21	Django **WARMERDAM**	(23) 02.09.95

FORWARDS

22	Michael **BREIJ**	(22) 15.01.97
14	Mohamed **EL HANKOURI** (Mor)	(21) 01.07.97
19	Paul **GLADON**	(26) 18.03.92
10	Mimoun **MAHI** (Mor)	(24) 13.03.94
11	Jannik **POHL** (Den)	(22) 06.04.96
9	Kaj **SIERHUIS**	(20) 27.04.98

COACH

Danny **BUIJS**	(36) 21.06.82

HEERENVEEN

GOALKEEPERS

23	Filip **BEDNAREK** (Pol)	(26) 26.09.92
25	Jan **BEKKEMA**	(22) 09.04.96
24	Trevor **DOORNBUSCH**	(19) 06.07.99
1	Warner **HAHN**	(26) 15.06.92

DEFENDERS

14	Ibrahim **DRESEVIC** (Swe)	(22) 24.01.97
27	Vanja **DRKUSIC** (Sln)	(19) 30.10.99
2	Sherel **FLORANUS**	(20) 23.08.98
3	Daniel **HOEGH** (Den)	(28) 06.01.91
35	Jizz **HORNKAMP**	(20) 07.03.98
5	Kik **PIERIE**	(18) 20.07.00
12	Doke **SCHMIDT**	(26) 07.04.92
4	Andreas **SKOVGAARD** (Den)	(21) 27.03.97
16	Lucas **WOUDENBERG**	(24) 25.04.94

MIDFIELDERS

22	Emil **FREDERIKSEN** (Den)	(18) 05.09.00
21	Yuki **KOBAYASHI** (Jap)	(26) 24.04.92
15	Rodney **KONGOLO**	(21) 09.01.98
32	Jan **RAS**	(20) 28.01.99
10	Ben **RIENSTRA**	(28) 05.06.90
6	Stijn **SCHAARS**	(35) 11.01.84
8	Morten **THORSBY** (Nor)	(22) 05.05.96
19	Pelle **VAN AMERSFOORT**	(22) 01.04.96
18	Michel **VLAP**	(21) 02.06.97

FORWARDS

29	John **IREDALE** (Aus)	(19) 01.08.99
17	Dennis **JOHNSEN** (Nor)	(21) 17.02.98
9	Sam **LAMMERS**	(21) 30.04.97
7	Nemanja **MIHAJLOVIC** (Ser)	(23) 19.01.96
11	Mitchell **VAN BERGEN**	(19) 27.08.99
30	Arjen **VAN DER HEIDE**	(17) 19.11.01

COACH

Jan **OLDE RIEKERINK**	(56) 22.02.63

HERACLES ALMELO

GOALKEEPERS

1	Janis **BLASWICH** (Ger)	(27) 02.05.91
16	Michael **BROUWER**	(26) 21.01.93
26	Koen **BUCKER**	(22) 18.06.96

DEFENDERS

2	Tim **BREUKERS**	(31) 04.11.87
3	Lennart **CZYBORRA** (Ger)	(19) 03.05.99
12	Wout **DROSTE**	(29) 20.05.89
34	Jeff **HARDEVELD**	(23) 27.02.95
13	Mats **KNOESTER**	(20) 19.11.98
4	Robin **PROPPER**	(25) 23.09.93
23	Maximilian **ROSSMANN** (Ger)	(23) 06.05.95
31	Stephen **SAMA** (Ger)	(25) 05.03.93
20	Jelle **VAN BENTHEM**	(20) 22.01.99
30	Tim **VAN DE BERG**	(21) 23.11.97
6	Dario **VAN DEN BUIJS** (Blg)	(23) 12.09.95
5	Bart **VAN HINTUM**	(32) 16.01.87

MIDFIELDERS

18	Jesper **DROST**	(26) 11.01.93
8	Lerin **DUARTE**	(28) 11.08.90
21	Sebastian **JAKUBIAK** (Ger)	(25) 21.06.93
27	Niels **LEEMHUIS**	(21) 28.09.97
52	Alexander **MERKEL** (Kaz)	(27) 22.02.92
14	Mohammed **OSMAN** (Syr)	(25) 01.01.94
10	Yoell **VAN NIEFF**	(25) 17.06.93

FORWARDS

9	Adrian **DALMAU** (Spa)	(24) 23.03.94
24	Dabney **DOS SANTOS**	(22) 31.07.96
22	Zeki **ERKILINC**	(21) 22.01.98
25	Joey **KONINGS**	(20) 21.04.98
17	Brandley **KUWAS** (Cur)	(26) 19.09.92
7	Kristoffer **PETERSON** (Swe)	(24) 28.11.94
11	Silvester **VAN DER WATER**	(22) 30.09.96

COACH

Frank **WORMUTH** (Ger)	(58) 13.09.60

NAC BREDA

GOALKEEPERS

26	Karol **NIEMCZYCKI** (Pol)	(19) 05.07.99
1	Benjamin **VAN LEER**	(26) 09.04.92
16	Theo **ZWARTHOED**	(36) 19.11.82

DEFENDERS

15	Dorian **DERVITE** (Fra)	(30) 25.07.88
23	Alex **GERSBACH** (Aus)	(21) 08.05.97
22	Khalid **KARAMI**	(29) 29.12.89
24	Daan **KLOMP**	(20) 10.08.98
4	Menno **KOCH**	(24) 02.07.94
21	Greg **LEIGH** (Eng)	(24) 30.09.94
32	Jethro **MASHART**	(18) 08.05.00
5	Karol **METS** (Est)	(25) 16.05.93
14	Erik **PALMER-BROWN** (USA)	(21) 24.04.97
2	Fabian **SPORKSLEDE**	(25) 03.08.93
46	Pele **VAN ANHOLT**	(27) 23.04.91

MIDFIELDERS

18	Grad **DAMEN**	(21) 14.08.97
8	Mounir **EL ALLOUCHI**	(24) 27.09.94
40	Luka **ILIC** (Ser)	(19) 02.07.99
19	Sullay **KAIKAI** (Eng)	(23) 26.08.95
27	Anouar **KALI** (Mor)	(27) 03.06.91
12	Ramon **LUNDQVIST** (Swe)	(21) 10.05.97
28	Gianluca **NIJHOLT**	(29) 14.02.90
20	Marwin **REUVERS**	(19) 04.03.99
3	Lucas **SCHOOFS** (Blg)	(22) 03.01.97
6	Arno **VERSCHUEREN** (Blg)	(21) 08.04.97

FORWARDS

10	Paolo **FERNANDES** (Spa)	(20) 19.08.98
33	Gervane **KASTANEER** (Cur)	(22) 09.06.96
7	Giovanni **KORTE**	(25) 01.08.93
11	Robert **MUHREN**	(29) 18.05.89
17	Mikhail **ROSHEUVEL**	(28) 10.08.90
9	Mitchell **TE VREDE**	(27) 07.08.91
29	Sydney **VAN HOOIJDONK**	(19) 06.02.00

COACH

Mitchell **VAN DER GAAG**	(47) 22.10.71

PEC ZWOLLE

GOALKEEPERS

1	Diederik **BOER**	(38) 24.09.80
23	Dean **BOUZANIS** (Aus)	(28) 02.10.90
16	Mickey **VAN DER HART**	(24) 13.06.94

DEFENDERS

47	Destan **BAJSELMANI**	(19) 13.03.99
20	Kingsley **EHIZIBUE**	(23) 25.05.95
18	Dico **KOPPERS**	(27) 31.01.92
29	Darryl **LACHMAN** (Cur)	(29) 11.11.89
3	Thomas **LAM** (Fin)	(25) 18.12.93
4	Yuta **NAKAYAMA** (Jap)	(22) 16.02.97
5	Kenneth **PAAL**	(21) 24.06.97
33	Sepp **VAN DEN BERG**	(17) 20.12.01
2	Bram **VAN POLEN**	(33) 11.10.85

MIDFIELDERS

34	Ouasim **BOUY**	(25) 11.06.93
19	Rick **DEKKER**	(23) 15.03.95
14	Zian **FLEMMING**	(20) 01.08.98
17	Denis **GENREAU** (Aus)	(19) 21.05.99
6	Gustavo **HAMER**	(21) 24.06.97
37	Steff **KAPTEIN**	(19) 27.08.99
32	Jarni **KOORMAN**	(19) 15.03.99
8	Clint **LEEMANS**	(23) 15.09.95
30	Eliano **REIJNDERS**	(18) 23.10.00
21	Younes **NAMLI** (Den)	(24) 20.06.94
49	Thomas **VAN DEN BELT**	(17) 18.06.01
31	Bas **VAN WIJNEN**	(21) 31.07.97

FORWARDS

22	Pelle **CLEMENT**	(22) 19.05.96
25	Stanley **ELBERS**	(26) 14.05.92
10	Lennart **THY** (Ger)	(26) 25.02.92
7	Vito **VAN CROOY**	(23) 29.01.96
9	Mike **VAN DUINEN**	(27) 06.11.91

COACH

Jaap **STAM**	(46) 17.07.72

PSV

GOALKEEPERS

13	Eloy **ROOM** (Cur)	(30) 06.02.89
41	Mike **VAN DE MEULENHOF**	(19) 11.05.99
31	Yanick **VAN OSCH**	(21) 24.03.97
1	Jeroen **ZOET**	(28) 06.01.91

DEFENDERS

6	**ANGELINO** (Spa)	(22) 04.01.97
3	Aziz **BEHICH** (Aus)	(28) 16.12.90
22	Denzel **DUMFRIES**	(22) 18.04.96
15	Armando **OBISPO**	(19) 05.03.99
20	Trent **SAINSBURY** (Aus)	(27) 05.01.92
5	Daniel **SCHWAAB** (Ger)	(30) 23.08.88
33	Jordan **TEZE**	(19) 30.09.99
4	Nick **VIERGEVER**	(29) 03.08.89

MIDFIELDERS

25	Erick **GUTIERREZ** (Mex)	(23) 15.06.95
8	Jorrit **HENDRIX**	(24) 06.02.95
52	Mohammed **IHATTAREN**	(17) 12.02.02
47	**MAURO JUNIOR** (Bra)	(19) 06.05.99
7	Gaston **PEREIRO** (Uru)	(23) 11.06.95
23	Bart **RAMSELAAR**	(22) 29.06.96
16	Dante **RIGO** (Blg)	(20) 11.12.98
18	Pablo **ROSARIO**	(22) 07.01.97
32	Michal **SADILEK** (CzR)	(19) 31.05.99
30	Ryan **THOMAS** (NZ)	(24) 20.12.94

FORWARDS

17	Steven **BERGWIJN**	(21) 08.10.97
44	Amar **CATIC** (Bos)	(20) 21.01.99
9	Luuk **DE JONG**	(28) 27.08.90
19	Cody **GAKPO**	(19) 07.05.99
11	Hirving **LOZANO** (Mex)	(23) 30.07.95
14	Donyell **MALEN**	(20) 19.01.99
10	Maximiliano **ROMERO** (Arg)	(20) 09.01.99
29	Matthias **VERRETH** (Blg)	(21) 20.02.98

COACH

Mark **VAN BOMMEL**	(41) 22.04.77

UTRECHT

GOALKEEPERS

1	David **JENSEN** (Den)	(26) 25.03.92
16	Nick **MARSMAN**	(28) 01.10.90
31	Thijmen **NIJHUIS**	(20) 25.07.98
41	Maarten **PAES**	(20) 14.05.98

DEFENDERS

13	Emil **BERGSTROM** (Swe)	(25) 19.05.93
5	Leon **GUWARA** (Ger)	(22) 28.06.96
14	Willem **JANSSEN**	(32) 04.07.86
17	Sean **KLAIBER**	(24) 31.07.94
15	Timo **LETSCHERT**	(25) 25.05.93
33	Christopher **MAMENGI**	(17) 03.04.01
2	Mark **VAN DER MAAREL**	(29) 12.08.89

MIDFIELDERS

23	Riechedly **BAZOER**	(22) 12.10.96
35	Tim **BRINKMAN**	(21) 22.03.97
28	Urby **EMANUELSON**	(32) 16.06.86
24	Nicolas **GAVORY** (Fra)	(24) 16.02.95
10	Simon **GUSTAFSON** (Swe)	(24) 11.01.95
6	Rico **STRIEDER** (Ger)	(26) 06.07.92
22	Sander **VAN DE STREEK**	(25) 24.03.93
8	Joris **VAN OVEREEM**	(24) 01.06.94

FORWARDS

19	Jean-Christophe **BAHEBECK** (Fra)	(25) 01.05.93
26	Othman **BOUSSAID** (Blg)	(18) 07.03.00
11	Cyriel **DESSERS** (Blg)	(24) 08.12.94
27	Lukas **GORTLER** (Ger)	(24) 15.06.94
7	Gyrano **KERK**	(23) 02.12.95
30	Michiel **KRAMER**	(30) 03.12.88
9	Simon **MAKIENOK** (Den)	(28) 21.11.90
21	Oussama **TANNANE** (Mor)	(24) 23.03.94
29	Nick **VENEMA**	(19) 09.04.99

COACH

Dick **ADVOCAAT**	(71) 27.09.47

VITESSE

Determined... Bryan Linssen

GOALKEEPERS

40	Bilal **BAYAZIT**	(19) 08.04.99
1	**EDUARDO** (Por)	(36) 19.09.82
22	Remko **PASVEER**	(35) 08.11.83

DEFENDERS

28	Alexander **BUTTNER**	(30) 11.02.89
5	Max **CLARK** (Eng)	(23) 19.01.96
14	Jake **CLARKE-SALTER** (Eng)	(21) 22.09.97
30	Danilho **DOEKHI**	(20) 30.06.98
8	Vyacheslav **KARAVAYEV** (Rus)	(23) 20.05.95
6	Arnold **KRUISWIJK**	(34) 02.11.84
26	Rasmus **THELANDER** (Den)	(27) 09.07.91
3	Maikel **VAN DER WERFF**	(29) 22.04.89

MIDFIELDERS

31	Hicham **ACHEFFAY**	(18) 10.08.00
23	Mukhtar **ALI** (Sau)	(21) 30.10.97
21	Matus **BERO** (Slk)	(23) 06.09.95
25	Navarone **FOOR**	(27) 04.02.92
39	Richonell **MARGARET**	(18) 07.07.00
20	Charly **MUSONDA** (Blg)	(22) 15.10.96
18	Martin **ODEGAARD** (Nor)	(20) 17.12.98
35	Jesse **SCHUURMAN**	(20) 11.03.98
17	Thulani **SERERO** (SAf)	(28) 11.04.90

FORWARDS

7	Roy **BEERENS**	(31) 22.12.87
33	Martijn **BERDEN**	(21) 29.09.97
29	Thomas **BUITINK**	(18) 14.06.00
13	Oussama **DARFALOU** (Alg)	(25) 23.09.93
19	Hilary **GONG** (Nga)	(20) 10.10.98
11	Bryan **LINSSEN**	(28) 08.10.90
9	Tim **MATAV** (Sln)	(30) 13.01.89
38	Richie **MUSABA**	(18) 06.12.00

COACH

Leonid **SLUTSKY** (Rus)	(47) 04.05.71

VVV-VENLO

GOALKEEPERS

1	Lars **UNNERSTALL** (Ger)	(28) 20.07.90
16	Delano **VAN CROOY**	(27) 05.06.91
22	Bram **VERBONG**	(19) 23.12.99

DEFENDERS

21	Axel **BORGMANN** (Ger)	(24) 08.07.94
17	Tristan **DEKKER**	(20) 27.03.98
4	Roel **JANSSEN**	(28) 16.06.90
25	Evren **KORKMAZ**	(21) 27.04.97
14	Christian **KUM**	(33) 13.09.85
3	Jerold **PROMES**	(34) 09.03.84
13	Nils **ROSELER** (Ger)	(27) 10.02.92
2	Moreno **RUTTEN**	(25) 28.04.93
20	Damian **VAN BRUGGEN**	(22) 18.03.96
30	Stan **VAN DIJCK**	(18) 07.10.00

MIDFIELDERS

36	Aaron **BASTIAANS**	(16) 04.04.02
34	Simon **JANSSEN**	(18) 25.09.00
29	Evert **LINTHORST**	(18) 03.03.00
10	Johnatan **OPOKU**	(28) 18.04.90
6	Danny **POST**	(29) 07.04.89
35	Sem **STEIJN**	(17) 17.11.01
31	Tino-Sven **SUSIC** (Bos)	(26) 13.02.92
8	Peter **VAN OOIJEN**	(27) 16.02.92
32	Paul **WIENHOVEN**	(19) 18.02.00

FORWARDS

11	Jay-Roy **GROT**	(20) 13.03.98
19	Patrick **JOOSTEN**	(22) 14.04.96
26	Peniel **MLAPA** (Tog)	(28) 20.02.91
38	Yahcuroo **ROEMER**	(17) 22.07.01
7	Martin **SAMUELSEN** (Nor)	(21) 17.04.97
9	Ralf **SEUNTJENS**	(29) 17.04.89

COACH

Maurice **STEIJN**	(45) 20.11.73

WILLEM II

GOALKEEPERS

28	Luuk **BRAND**	(18) 04.03.00
1	Timon **WELLENREUTHER** (Ger)	(23) 03.12.95
12	Michael **WOUD** (NZ)	(20) 16.01.99

DEFENDERS

33	Jarno **ABBEL**	(20) 14.01.99
15	Damil **DANKERLUI**	(22) 24.08.96
3	Freek **HEERKENS**	(29) 13.09.89
2	Fernando **LEWIS**	(26) 31.01.93
24	James **McGARRY** (NZ)	(20) 09.04.98
25	Thomas **MEISSNER** (Ger)	(27) 26.03.91
5	Diego **PALACIOS** (Ecu)	(19) 12.07.99
4	Jordens **PETERS**	(31) 03.05.87
19	Dylan **RYAN** (Aus)	(18) 10.06.00
27	Victor **VAN DEN BOGERT**	(19) 12.08.99

MIDFIELDERS

22	Atakan **AKKAYNAK** (Ger)	(20) 05.01.99
23	Vurnon **ANITA**	(29) 04.04.89
14	Daniel **CROWLEY** (Eng)	(21) 03.08.97
32	Robin **LAUWERS**	(19) 18.03.99
6	Elmo **LIEFTINK**	(25) 22.02.94
8	Pol **LLONCH** (Spa)	(26) 07.10.92
7	Aras **OZBILIZ** (Arm)	(28) 09.03.90
17	Dries **SADDIKI**	(22) 09.08.96
26	Renato **TAPIA** (Per)	(23) 28.07.95
16	Marios **VROUSAI** (Gre)	(20) 02.07.98

FORWARDS

18	Donis **AVDIJAJ** (Kos)	(22) 25.08.96
20	Karim **COULIBALY** (Fra)	(25) 03.06.93
9	Alexander **ISAK** (Swe)	(19) 21.09.99
21	Kristofer **KRISTINSSON** (Ice)	(19) 07.04.99
29	Justin **OGENIA** (Cur)	(20) 05.02.99
10	Vangelis **PAVLIDIS** (Gre)	(20) 21.11.98

COACH

Adrie **KOSTER**	(64) 18.11.54

(ages as of 22.02.19)

Most recent...NYCFC's Sebastien Ibeagha (right) challenges Andreas Ivan of Red Bulls last August

NEW YORK CITY v NEW YORK RED BULLS

Hudson River derby is the real deal as far as MLS is concerned

With huge distances between many of its clubs, it is rare for two MLS sides to engage in the sort of passionate local dispute that football evokes in cities the world over.

But in no time at all, a fledgling rivalry has quickly sprung up on opposing banks of New York's Hudson River.

Formed in 1994 as New York/New Jersey MetroStars and then rebranded in 2006 when sold to the energy-drinks company, New York Red Bulls are based in New Jersey. But while they did meet other local teams – playing the now defunct FC New York and New York Cosmos in the US Open Cup – there was no New York City side in MLS until Manchester City, in association with the New York Yankees baseball team, paid the $100million expansion fee to join the league in 2015.

When NYCFC began playing in MLS it was assumed that any friction with the team on the other side of the river was just a marketing fabrication. But meetings between the two clubs soon witnessed an increasing level of animosity, both on and off the pitch.

Red Bulls fans feel aggrieved that the newcomers, who play their home games at Yankee Stadium, did not adhere to MLS guidelines on stadium plans. They also point to a conveyor belt of ageing European stars turning up for one last payday.

For their part, NYCFC fans believe this is just jealousy from a club who have never attracted publicity or public support in the same way that the new kids on the block have.

Hostilities recommence at the Red Bull Arena on July 14. WS

Local squabble...Red Bulls' Felipe (centre) gets involved

ON BOTH SIDES

JASON HERNANDEZ
- 2005
- 2015-16

CLAUDIO REYNA
- 2007-08
- (sporting director) 2013-present

MEHDI BALLOUCHY
- 2010-12
- 2014-16

RYAN MEARA
- 2012-present
- (loan) 2015

CLASSIC ENCOUNTERS

2015 May 10 Despite being reduced to 10 men in the first half following Matt Miazga's sending off, Red Bulls won the first meeting 2-1.

2016 May 21 Red Bulls continued their dominance of the fixture and made it four wins out of four, equalling the MLS record for the largest margin of victory by thrashing their rivals 7-0 at Yankee Stadium.

2016 July 3 At the sixth time of asking, NYCFC finally triumphed in the derby, Jack Harrison and David Villa getting the goals in a 2-0 victory.

2017 Aug 6 David Villa scored a hat-trick as NYCFC won 3-2 – a performance that led to the 35-year-old being recalled to the Spanish national squad after an absence of three years.

2018 Aug 22 Bradley Wright-Phillips' goal in a 1-1 draw was his 12th in a fixture that has only been played 12 times. Of those dozen meetings, Red Bulls have won six, while NYCFC have won four, with two derbies being drawn.

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